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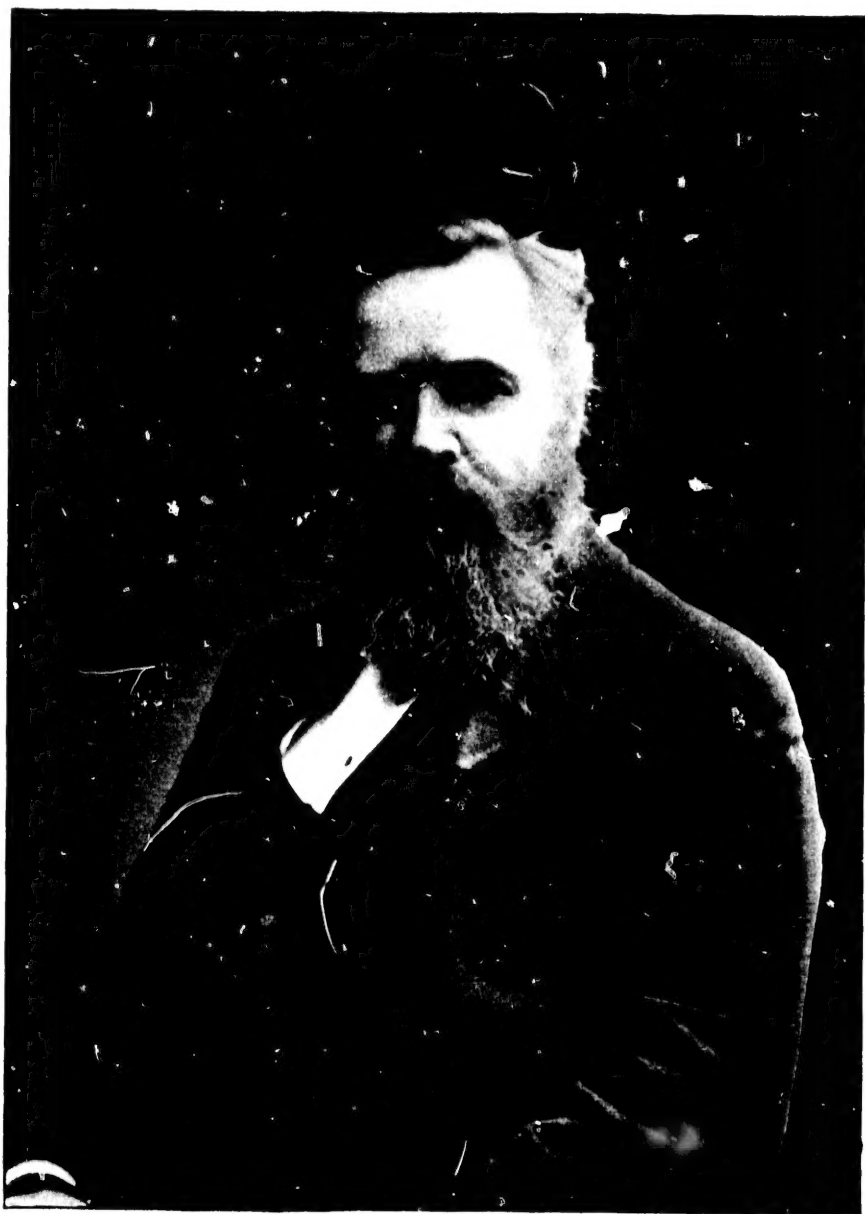
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THE RED, RED WINE.









REV. J. JACKSON WRAY.





THE  
RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

BY

J. JACKSON WRAY,

Author of "Nestleton Magna," "Matthew Mellowdew," etc.

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## PREFACE.

**I**T is a source of satisfaction to me to have the privilege of publishing the Rev. J. Jackson Wray's last, and perhaps his most powerfully-written, tale. Like the author's other works, it has a purpose, and in this instance it is that of advocating the claims of temperance. For years, in season and out of season, he was a champion in the cause of total abstinence. With voice and pen he denounced the traffic which is carrying woe into the happy homes of this and other lands, and filling to overflowing our prisons, workhouses, and asylums.

The scene of the story is laid in East Yorkshire, his native district, which he knew and loved so well. After toiling beyond his strength in busy London, he would return to breathe his native air, and gain strength for future undertakings. Here he would collect facts for illustration of sermon, speech, and story, and from his own remembrances and from his own folk were the materials gathered for this book. In the first instance the facts were used for temperance addresses, called "Through

One Street." This street was the main thoroughfare of the village where he spent his early life.

Mr. T. Jackson Wray, the author's son, tells me that the work was criticised when in serial form as being overdrawn, too tragical, in fact. The fault is due not to the narrator, but to the drink, for there is not one incident, however terrible, which has not had its counterpart in the lives of those who at one time dwelt in that "One Street."

It now only remains for me to thank the author's son for going carefully over the work before it was printed in its present form, and to express a hope that it will be welcomed by the reading public, and induce many to join the temperance ranks.

The illustrations in this volume are by Mr. Kenneth M. Skeaping, and the frontispiece is from a photograph by Mr. Barry, of Hull, taken shortly before Mr. Wray's death.

WILLIAM ANDREWS.

THE HULL PRESS.

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# THE RED, RED WINE.



## CHAPTER I.

IT was Sabbath morning. The midsummer glory was over all. Midsummer scents and sounds filled the genial air, and the melodious music of the Netherborough bells, wafted across field and brook and garden, fell upon the ears of the church-going towns-folk as a fitting accompaniment. The peal of bells that swung in the square, squat, red-brick steeple of Netherborough Parish Church, was quite notable for its silvern harmonies for many and many a mile around; but I dare to say that never since they left the moulds of the bell-foundry had they given forth mellower music than on that Midsummer Sabbath morning, full fifty years ago.

That, at any rate, was the opinion of old Aaron Brigham, as he left his little cottage on the Spaldon Road, and bent his steps towards "Zion Chapel," the humble temple wherein, for well-nigh fourscore years, he had been accustomed to worship God.

Try to get a good look at him. See, he doffs his low felt hat respectfully as the Vicar passes by, for the Reverend Septimus Bartley has also heard the summons of the Sabbath bells, and is on his way to Church, and to his high and holy duty there. The vicar has a warm, hearty greeting for his aged parishioner, though he is going

like a stray sheep to the conventicle yonder, near the market place, rather than to the true fold where the Vicar is the shepherd of the sheep. Mr. Bartley knows old Aaron well, and admires and respects him; and Aaron, staunch Nonconformist as he is, never bends his head in "Zion" without offering a prayer for the Vicar in his desk and pulpit, that God will "help him from on high, an' give him a good tahme while he leads his congregation i' prayer an' praise, an' while he breaks to 'em the bread o' life." It would probably not be too much to say that old Aaron had offered exactly that prayer, without gap or change, Sunday by Sunday, for a good half-hundred years.

Aaron's locks, as the June sunshine falls on them, are seen to be long and thin, silky white in texture and in colour; and, in the light of the midsummer morning, it is not any great stretch of fancy to imagine a halo round them, and sure I am, that never a saint in the calendar could have carried his coronal more fittingly than he. The old man is tall in stature still, though the burden of his fourscore years has bowed him somewhat. His step is wonderfully firm and steady, and with the aid of his "trusty staff," he can get over the ground a good deal more quickly than some of his contemporaries, who are twenty years his junior,—but of this, as the old authors say, more anon.

Just as old Aaron was nearing his destination, he was met by a little maid of some six summers, or seven at most. She came bounding towards him, as with an absolute certainty that a loving reception awaited her. She was very poorly clad; the boots upon her feet were so worn and broken that they were scarcely deserving of the name, and her little frock was but "a thing of shreds and patches," a small and tattered banneret that told how the battle had gone in the fierce fight with poverty and want. It was an old young face, painfully pinched and pale, that looked up into the old man's eyes; but the glad smile that beamed all

over it at the sight of him, brought out an innocent beauty that sorrow had failed to kill. The little fingers that twined around the horny hand of the aged patriarch were rough, and red, and swollen, with such labour as never ought to be the hap of so wee a toiler. The old man bent low and kissed her, then lifted her in his arms, and kissed her again, as he said :

"Why, Kitty, my bairn ! My sweet lahtle Kitty. What's browt thoo here this mornin' ? Is the' goin' te t' chapil wi' me ?"

Kitty looked at her ragged frock, and broken boots ; and as the smile left her face, she shook her head sadly, and heaved a half sigh, half sob, and drooped her curly little head on the old man's shoulder.

"Nivver mind, lahtle lassie !" said Aaron tenderly, patting her back in soothing fashion. "I might ha' knoan. Nivver mind. Thoo can say thy prayers at home, can't tha' ? What hez tha' cum for, Kitty ?"

"Only to see you," she whispered lovingly, and folding her little arms around his neck, she kissed him again and again and again.

Then she gave him to understand that the interview was over, that her object was attained, and climbing down from her sweet resting-place, she hastened away, as fast as her wee legs could carry her, to the mean and miserable shelter which she called "home !"

"Poor lahtle Kitty !" said Aaron to himself, as he entered the Chapel. He did not wipe away the kisses from his lips. Why should he ? No worshipper in "Zion" that morning brought a more precious or acceptable offering to the Lord, and never "a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons" was so dearly valued by the Master of the House !

The Master of the House, and He alone, knew how earnestly, how lovingly, how pleadingly, Aaron Brigham

prayed that morning for "lahtle Kitty," for her "feyther," and her "home."

I think I had better, at this point, tender to my readers another word or two of explanation. Story-writers—"novelist" I am not, and never shall be—are always supposed to introduce a "hero" and a "heroine." They are expected to deal with love-passages, and entanglements, and trials, to prove that the "course of true love never did run smooth," and all the rest of it. Now, I desire to say that my "hero" in this history is Aaron Brigham, whose years are fourscore years and five; and my "heroine" is none other than "lahtle Kitty," whose years are six, or as she would certainly have put it—"going of seven." They are an oddly-assorted couple, I know; but love levels all distinctions, and never a fonder pair of lovers ever shone in the pages of romance, and by the time we shall have to take our leave of them—not without tears, as I fully expect—it shall go hard with me, my readers, if you are not head and ears in love with them, too! Let me introduce them properly.

Aaron Brigham, eighty-five. Kitty Smart, six.

Aaron had a "good time" at Zion that morning. He generally had, for he never went but with a firm intent to gain a personal interview with the Master of the House, and as the Master was always of the same mind, Aaron was able, like the two disciples, to return, saying, "I have seen the Lord." On this occasion, however, there were special reasons why the hour of worship should be an hour of gladness and of peace. His heart and soul were filled with strong sympathy and desire for another's well-being, though that other was only a ragged little maiden from the street. That is worship such as our Elder Brother dearly loves and owns; and the Jewish proverb is true, my masters, true as the dear love of Christ, "He that prays for another is heard for himself."

There must have been some show of all this in Aaron Brigham's bearing as he strode home with buoyant step and cheerful mien. He was met on the way by two of the towns-folk, George Caffer, the painter, and Philip Lambert, the barber, a pair of cronies who had three things in common—unusual skill and ability in their callings, unusual subjection to the bondage of John Barleycorn, an unusual antipathy to the Christian and the Christian creed.

"Hallo, Aaron," said Caffer, with a ready jeer, he had already had to have a "refresher" at the sign of the "Swinging Gate," day of rest though it was. "Why, where ha' yo' been, nan? You should ha' been with us. My word, but it hez been grand. What ha' yo' been doin'? You look as though summat was worth fetchin'; quite blithe like, and lithesome as a young four-year-old."

"Hey, that you do," interposed Lambert, with a view to uphold his comrade.

Aaron stood still, drew himself up to his full height, looked down with a serene smile on the two cronies who were trying to draw him out, and said,

"An' so would you if you'd had sense to be where I was, an' to hear what I've heeard."

"Where? What? Tell us?" said they in a breath.

"I've been to the readin' o' my Feyther's will."

"O that's it, is it?" said Caffer, with a sneer, fully understanding the allusion. "An' how much has He left yo', eh?"

"A hundred-fold more in this present life, and in the world to come, life everlasting."

As the old man spoke, his face bore witness to the wealth of his present legacy, and as he lifted his eyes to the cloudless heavens overhead, the silenced listeners felt that he had "a good hope through grace" of the bequest of glory that would fall to him by-and-by.

"Good mornin', neighbours," said Aaron, as the shallow

pair passed onward; "*an' don't forget that your names are in the will.*"

"Phil," said George Caffer, as they sauntered homeward, "there must be something in it after all."

"Aye, lad," quoth Lambert, not without a certain reverence in his tone, "if there was more Aaron Brighams about, there would be fewer '*septics*,' as they call us. But the bulk on 'em isn't up to sample, an' their faith shakes hands wi' their works so seldom, that I for one think precious lahtle about either." Then there fell upon them a spell of silence as they turned to watch the aged "preacher of righteousness," until he passed into the little garden which fronted his cottage home.

"Come in, Aaron. Come in. Your dinner's waitin' for yo', an' it's never right to spoil good vitals by lettin' 'em get cowed before yo' eat 'em."

Aaron had lingered a little on the threshold. He was loth to shut out the June sunshine, loth to turn his eyes away from the June roses that embowered his cottage door, loth, too, to break away from the happy flow that rippled through the soul of him, as he thought of the provisions of his Father's will.

But he had to. The dispenser of the invitation just quoted was Esther Harland, the middle-aged and most capable housekeeper, who had constituted herself the keeper of Aaron, as well as of his house, and who fulfilled her self-imposed mission cheerily and well. If Esther was just a little imperative and self-assertive, and slightly impatient of contradiction, it was all and always for his comfort and safe-guarding, and that he knew right well.

"Look here, owd friend," she insisted, pointing to the well-plenished round table in the middle of the kitchen floor, "You never had a nicer meal o' meat since the day you wore short frocks, tho' I daresay a worse 'un tasted better i' them days. Cum an' hev it while its warm."

A smile flitted across Esther's pleasant face as she pictured to herself tall old Aaron in the juvenile garb referred to, and laying her hand on his arm, she gently forced him into the Windsor chair placed ready for him.

"Why to tell the 'ruth, Esther, I was in no great hurry. I was hevin' a good meal o' meat all to myself, standin' among them pratty roses i' the sunshine, an' thinkin' o' wha't my Heavenly Feyther's preparin'—"

"Preparin'," said Esther, whose mind was set just then on far more material things. "I should think you could afford to let what's preparin', as you call it, wait a bit till it's wanted, an' take your chance when yo' hev' it o' meking the best o' what is prepared already,—an' that's your dinner Ask a blessin' on it, Aaron. I feel a bit sharp set myself."

"O," said Aaron, dryly, "that explains it," and quietly did as he was told, for the old man had a vein of humour in him.

Such was Aaron Brigham, and such were his surroundings in the long, long ago when it was the writer's privilege to wear short frocks; and such they were on that subsequent morning, when pinafores had given way to clothing more akin to man's attire.

Now it was during this same midsummer month of June, that Netherborough came to be in a state of excitement, without parallel in the history of the place. The oldest inhabitant declared that he had seen nothing like it since the day when the big bon-fire was kindled on the market hill to celebrate the final defeat of "Bonyparty" at Waterloo.

It is well known that "the oldest inhabitant" is a very useful authority, quoted on countless occasions by writers of every sort and size. In general, however, he is a very indefinite and unproducible individual. In this case, however, I am able, and proud in being able, to produce the very man.



The oldest inhabitant of Netherborough was none other than old Aaron Brigham. I am aware that there were those among the townsfolk who called the fact into question. But what of that? There are people who seem able to do nothing else. Everything in turn is questioned by somebody. The Netherborough doubters gave the palm of seniority to Geordie Hewitson, the parish clerk. Geordie's grey head had been a familiar sight in the lower desk of Netherborough church for nobody knows how long, and it had never been aught but grey, as everybody knew.

This latter remarkable phenomenon may be accounted for by the fact that Geordie wore a wig. As an argument it had no value, for the honest old clerk himself declared for Aaron.

"Aaron was older than me from the very first," he says. "We was boys together, an' we sat on the very same form in Mother Elliker's dame school. I allus admired him, an' I dearly wanted to be as big an' as old as him, but"—he used to add, dropping into broad Yorkshire—"I've nivver overtakken 'im to this day. I'm neeather as owd nor as big, an' we're both on us growin' downwards noo, an' if I was only hauf as good, I reckon I should be riddy to join the angels ony minnit."

This was surely an admirable certificate of character for Aaron Brigham, and all the more satisfactory that it was the testimony of an uncompromising Churchman concerning a Nonconformist who was never suspected, by his more assertive brethren, of having any "weakness in the knees."

The time is coming, God speed it! when Judah's vexings and Ephraim's envyings shall cease for ever; all such sorrowful possibilities being swept away by the on-flow and the influx of the love of the Christ who is Brother and Lord of all.

## CHAPTER II.

**I**T was a red-letter day at Netherborough, and if ever the annals of that incipient city come to be written, that never-to-be-forgotten fifteenth of June, 18—, will certainly be recorded in the reddest of red ink, headed with an illuminate capital, after the fashion of the missals of mediæval days.

Not even at the 'lumination, as it was called in local history, at the coronation of Queen Victoria, were the people of Netherborough so greatly stirred as now. And yet that *was* a time. I can remember it, though I was but "a wee bit bairnie" at the time. Every window in the town had a lighted candle in it, and many windows had a candle gleaming in every pane. Many of these candles were wax, blue, red, green, yellow, my goodness! and as tall as a walking-stick, and as thick as a man's wrist. The children of the various Sunday Schools had each a medal and a ribbon, and marched through the town, all but bowed to the earth with pride, and then feasted on the fat of the land until they could scarce walk home for the weight they carried. O, but that was a day.

Still, Netherborough had never, never been so profoundly stirred as now. Aaron Brigham himself was as much excited as his juniors. This in itself is strong evidence that there was abundant reason why. Old age is not very sensitive to surprise. The organ of wonder flattens a good deal in the presence of whitening hairs. Yet old Aaron was filled with wonderment.

On the market hill, at the churchyard corner, in front

of the Netherborough Arms, and elsewhere, clusters of townsfolk were discussing the news of the day; *the* news, mark you, news which, after all, was scarcely discussible, for this reason, that it almost took their breath away.

There was to be a York and Netherborough Railway!

Fifty years ago, railways were not by any means so numerous as they are to-day, and, as a rule, the lesser provincial towns had reaped but small advantage from the introduction of the iron highways and their iron steeds. Such places as were situated on the few existing main lines were, of course, exceptions to the general rule; but branch lines were few and far between, and the daily coach and the weekly waggon were the only means of commercial communication with the great world outside.

As yet, the Netherburgers were far away beyond the reach of train transport, and seemed, in all likelihood, to be condemned to isolation for many a long year to come. Netherborough was a small market town of some fifteen hundred inhabitants. It was situated about half-way between the ancient city of York and the thriving seaport of Kingston-upon-Hull. It lay directly at the foot of the far-famed Yorkshire Wolds, and on the borders of the great plain of York, through which the sluggish streams of the Ouse and the Trent wandered deviously to the sea. It was a region of large and fertile farms, and its crops of wheat and other cereals were noted alike for quality and quantity far beyond the boundaries of the Riding and the shire. The chronic difficulty was that of transportation—how to get the grain, the roots, the cattle, and other agricultural produce to market, for markets of value and importance were so very far away.

"If we only had a railway," the town folk said, "we could compete with all the county," and they proudly added, "we could hold a foremost place in the competition, too." But the "if" in this case was a formidable matter,

and a railway was regarded as a boon far away beyond their reach. Even while they longed for it, they laughed at the idea of getting it, and honestly thought that to ask for it would be as futile a request as the proverbial operation of crying for the moon.

The French have a proverb to the effect that it is the impossible that happens. It will hardly pass muster, perhaps, for absolute truthfulness, but in this instance it was true both in substance and in fact, for Netherborough was to have a railway, nay more, it was to have it without the asking. The great Railway King, George Huddlestone, Esq., M.P., had said it, and "where the voice of a king is, there is power." In the excited state of the share-markets of that period, speculating thousands said of him, as another crowd of simpletons said of Herod, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man," and the voice had said, "Netherborough shall have a railway!"

His Railway Majesty never let the grass grow under his feet in those palmy days of his prosperity. In an incredibly short time the Bill had passed both Houses of Parliament; the necessary land-purchases had been made, the contracts had been signed, and on this never-to-be-forgotten day, the 15th of June, 18—, the first sod was to be cut in the field where the Netherborough Station was to be erected, amid ceremonials, festivities, and rejoicings such as Netherborough had never before known.

Old Aaron Brigham, who was quite as excited as his juniors, wandered to and fro among the clusters of curious gossipers who enlivened the streets that morning. He was quite unable to continue in one stay, and equally unable to repress his desire to be on friendliest terms with all and sundry.

The group of idlers, whose customary gathering-place was at the "Church Corner," abutting on the market-place, stood expectant of the old man's greeting; a motley cluster

of men with dilapidated characters, whose idle hands were thrust as usual into the pockets of their equally dilapidated garments--votaries of John Barleycorn, every man of them, and every man bearing on his reddened face and ragged rairient the tokens of their debasing servitude to that enslaving tyrant of the town.

"Weel, weel, weel," said Aaron, pausing as he passed. "I've never seen nowt like this, lads. To think that I should live to see t' iron hoss come canterin' ower t' Shipham hills, an' gallopin' under t' Springwell hills, an' nowt to stop it. An' t' Toon Close is to be level'd as flat as the back o' my hand, an' a railway station is to be built on it. Steam-injuns are goin' to snort an' whistle, an' scream, an' play all sorts o' cantrips where I used to play at roonders well-nigh fourscore years since. To think that I should live to see the day! Folks say that wonders never cease. I think surely they're only just beginin'."

"Nay, Aaron, nay; not so fast, owd friend. It hasn't come to that, yit."

The speaker was Tommy Smart, a loafing "labourer," who did not labour except under strong compulsion, and whose smartness was most apparent when somebody asked him to have a glass of ale. A strong, good-looking, and capable man was Smart when he was at his best, which was sadly seldom; and utterly weak, ill-looking, and incapable, when under the influence of the "curse of Netherborough," which, alas, was almost all the time.

"It'll tek some time," continued Smart, "before what you say can happen. Big jobs like new railways can't be done like magic, Aaron; an' mebbe you won't live to see it through. You're a very owd man, you see."

"Thoo's quite right, Tommy," said the old man, "but I expect to see it through for all that. I isn't quite as strong on my pins as I used to be, but I'm worth a good many dead 'uns yet. Not that I'm at all afeard o' goin' when my

time comes. I put that matter into Good Hands mair than fifty years back, an' I can afford to leave it there. They're weil-kept that God keeps, and I isn't likely to seek a change. Can thoo say as much, Tom Smart?"

"There, tak' thy change oot o' that, Smart," said Joe Hepton, with a laugh. "Still, you know its true, Aaron. You are gettin' owd."

"Gettin'? Nay, I've gotten owd, an' very owd, but I'll tell yo' what, I'm younger than either of you."

As the old veteran spoke, he stood upright, struck the end of his stick firmly on the ground, and faced the two men, as if confident that then and there the life within him was sounder, livelier, and wholesomer than theirs.

The cheers of the bystanders gave the old patriarch a unanimous vote, though both Smart and Hepton were his juniors by near fifty years. The old man continued with a dry humour peculiar to him :

"Lads ! they don't sell good medicine at the 'Red Cow,' an' it's you that get's milked, not it, both o' money, an' meals, an' manhood, an' what's left meks even the joys o' John Barleycorn a mighty poor brew. I may live to see t' new railway oppen'd, or I may not, but, at ony rate," he continued, looking meaningly at the bibulous Smart, "I shall tek' nowt into my inside that puts me to a disadvantage. I reckon that the railway will be finished in a couple o' years, an' I expect that strong ale will hap some o' you up under yon churchyard grass, before my time comes. Hey, poor lads, I do wish you would tak' a turn an' mend !"

It was very true. Old Aaron was likely enough to outlast a good many of his contemporaries. He had a strong constitution, which, thanks to temperate habits, a common-sense diet, fresh air and exercise, and a life-walk in the fear of God was wondrously well preserved. He was neither dull of hearing, nor dim of vision, nor was his natural

strength so very greatly abated for all his fourscore years and five.

"Why you *are* a wonder," said Tommy Smart, willing to conciliate, "there's no mistake about that. You must ha' some magic mixture that keeps you goin'."

"Right you are," said Aaron, with a happy smile on his weather-browned face, "an I'll tell yo' what it is. It's made up o' cowl water an' broon bread honest work, an' a good conscience afore God an' man. That's the prescription, Tommy. I'll mek' yo' a present on it. It's a magic mixture that will keep *you* goin', an' keep yo' *from* goin' to the 'Red Cow,' or to any other spot where the devil's mixture is always on the tap."

"That's right, Aaron, that's right. Talk to him for his good. Tommy Smart's a good deal too much of a toss-pot. It will be a good thing well done if you can get him to take a turn and mend."

The words were spoken by a new-comer, who had appeared upon the scene in time to hear old Aaron's final sentences. His words were greeted by the by-standers with a burst of laughter and applause. There was nothing very witty in what was said; but it was said by Mr. Norwood Hayes, and as that gentleman was decidedly the most popular man in Netherborough, whatever he said was to be received with cheers.

A tall, shapely, even handsome, man, was Mr. Norwood Hayes, eminently intelligent as well as attractive in face and feature. He held a good position in the town as a corn-factor, an agricultural implement maker, and was also great in parochial affairs. A very worthy man, a very worthy man indeed, was Mr. Norwood Hayes, and as this life-story will need his presence oft and much, I bespeak for him, my readers, favourable regard.

Aaron Brigham did not appear to receive the support of Mr. Hayes with any great amount of gratitude, judging from

the quiet way in which he "looked him over," and the equally quiet way in which he replied.

"There's toss-pot and toss-*port*, sir. It's hard to say which on 'em tosses farthest. Both on 'em can toss to the devil; and it won't mek' much difference to the tossed 'uns which it was that tossed 'em there. Tak' a turn an' mend is a good game to play at. It's like roonders, where everybody gets their innin's, or owt to do."

Of course this sally was *not* greeted with applause, at least not until Mr. Norwood Hayes had passed on, for the Netherborough loafers, like some more respectable people, had more freedom of utterance behind the backs of the parties most concerned.

Mr. Hayes smiled, and nodded affably at old Aaron—he was seldom greatly ruffled—as he retired, saying: "True, Aaron, very true. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.'"

Aaron Brigham watched his retreating form with somewhat of sadness mingled with admiration in his eyes. There was a look on his aged face as if he was thinking deeply; but he never said a word. Had he spoken, he would have said, I think, something like this:

"You're a good man, Norwood Hayes, and a strong one; what a pity you are not something more. Nobody could do so much to lift the curse of Netherborough as you, if you only were so minded. You will be, some day, but how much will it take of pain and sorrow, I wonder, to bring it about?"

As the time was drawing near for the special ceremonial of the day, the various groups of gossipers dissolved, and as even Tommy Smart could find no satisfaction in lounging by himself, he, too, adjourned to his familiar resort—the bar of the "Red Cow." There were a few coppers in his pocket, and talking had made him thirsty. That was, at any rate, the excuse he made to himself for spending them



in beer, though in his miserable "home" down in Southgate, yonder, there are four small children, including the wee white slave, little Kitty Smart—Old Aaron Brigham's child-lover, on whose brave shoulders the whole burden of the "mitherless bairns" was laid. I must defer a more specific introduction of my "heroine" for a while, for I mean to do justice to her, so far as my poor pen can manage it.

### CHAPTER III.

**A** LONG the main street of Netherborough went Mr. Norwood Hayes, walking erect as was his wont, looking, as folks say, every inch a man, and with a gentlemanly and courteous bearing which was eminently characteristic of him. He had a nod and a smile for everybody who seemed to expect it. He had a pause, a salutation, and a hand-grip for the selected few ; and once, on his way, he put his hand within the arm of a young man whom he overtook, and walked with him, winning a new and stronger hold on his affection and regard.

Mr. Norwood Hayes was very popular with the young men of Netherborough, and rightly so, for he was deeply interested in them, and did his best, at least he thought so, for their welfare. In that, however, good man, he was sadly mistaken, at least in one all-important particular, as will be manifest to the reader all too soon. At length he reached his office, a quite imposing edifice, measured on the Netherborough scale, of brick and stone. Here and there the stone was sculptured into stony sheaves of corn, a stony Ceres and her well plenished cornucopia, stony reapers at work with stony sickles in their hands. These and many other devices of the sculptor's chisel illustrated the secular calling of Mr. Norwood Hayes. This was still more plainly set forth on the wire window-blinds of the office, where the following legend in gilded capitals was inscribed : "Norwood Hayes, Corn Merchant and Miller, Depôt for Agricultural Implements of every description. Agent for the Yorkshire Fire and Life Insurance Co."

Behind the offices lay the warehouses, sheds, and other

buildings, in which were stored sacks, corn, seeds, linseed cakes, ploughs, harrows, and all other matters connected with Mr. Hayes' large and inclusive trade. At the further end of the long yard was a broad and brawling brook, which at times was so swollen with freshets from the wolds as to be quite a river. This stream was known as the Netherborough Beck. A pleasant pathway bordered it, and provided the townsfolk with an attractive sauntering place through green pastures and fair fields.

Mr. Norwood Hayes did not "live at the business," though he lived by it, and made a good thing of it beyond the cost of doing so. He had quite a delightful place of his own, a little out of town, on the Scanton Road. It was hardly a "mansion," perhaps, but it was worthy of a better name than "villa," that hackneyed French importation that suggests stucco and semi-detachments. Mr. Hayes himself had named it Throstle's Nest, and the name suited it to a T, as they say, though why a B or a F or a W would not do as well, passes the wit of man to discover. It was a snug rural nest, and as luxuriously cosy as anybody could well desire. Mrs. Hayes, their son Cuthbert, their daughter Alice, and himself, constituted the entire household at Throstle's Nest, with the exception of two maids, a manservant, and a boy, who probably made as much work as they performed, and so kept the balance even.

The "first sod" of the new railway was to be cut at four o'clock precisely, and no less important an individual than George Huddlestone, Esq., the great railway king, was to perform the ceremony. That great financier and adventurous speculator was rightly regarded as the best friend that Netherborough had ever known. He had purchased a large landed estate in the immediate neighbourhood, and had already given clear proof of his belief that if property has its rights it has its duties and its obligations too.

Now this was an astounding innovation. The good folks of Netherborough had not been at all accustomed to that kind of thing. Fifty years ago the duties, obligations, and responsibilities of the landed classes were not very generally recognised. Things are more promising now, and even yet there is abundant room to mend.

The Dukes of Debenham, from whom the estate had passed, were of no more use to Netherborough than was the celebrated Duke Humphrey. Not so much, for according to tradition he does accept your company to dinner, though the meal is of the scantiest. The Dukes of Debenham, on the contrary, were never seen at all, and seldom heard of, except on rent days, when the tenants were actually invited to dine with—the steward!

With Mr. Huddleston, matters were managed in a very different way. As soon as his great purchase was completed, he set to work to improve the condition, and to advance the interests, of the little market town close by. What wonder that Netherborough swore by George Huddleston? What wonder that the Debenhams and all their ducal traditions vanished into thin air, which precisely represented their genuine value. It was the new lord of the manor that lighted Netherborough's sombre streets with gas, and he it was who had brought the crowning gift—the railway! Is it to be wondered at that the railway king was the man whom the townsfolk delighted to honour? The fact is that his majesty is held in true regard and grateful remembrance at Netherborough to this day.

Of course on that great day of the turning of the first sod, the townspeople were resolved that the place should be dressed in its very best, and indeed it was well-nigh "dressed to death," that is to say, it was almost smothered in flags and bunting; and both banners and bunting bore strange mottoes and devices illustrative of Netherborough genius and wit. On the town pump itself, which held its

time-honoured place on the market hill, was hoisted a flag, which waved "Success to our Railway!" before the eyes of all who passed that way. Right across the front of the big square inn, known as the "Netherborough Arms," was stretched a long broad strip of crimson cloth, bearing in white letters the grateful inscription, "Welcome to Netherborough's Best Friend." Quite remarkable, was it not, that everybody knew this referred to George Huddleston, and that not a single being linked it with the name of any Duke of Debenham that ever wore a coronet, or carried away the rents?

There was a coach running every day between York and Hull, which always stopped at the "Netherborough Arms" for change of horses. The daily advent of the "Highflier" gave quite a throb of life to the sleepy little town. The sound of the guard's horn, as he blew a ringing blast, not musical but strong, at the "town-end," called out the children to shout, the dogs to bark, and the folk to gaze in curious wonder at the strangers who came and went. This was Netherborough's daily dram of excitement, and was so very mild a stimulus that the veriest teetotaler could not have found the heart to dash it from their lips.

Now the "Highflier" used once upon a time to put up at the "Grapes," a rival hotel a few doors distant from the "Netherborough Arms." When, in consequence of some disagreement, the coach transferred its patronage to the last named inn, the "Grapes" took huge offence, and never lost an opportunity of belittling the "Highflier," and predicting the time when its pride would have a fall.

Now its time had come. The "Grapes" displayed a large and roughly effective picture, "The Death of the 'Highflier.'" A railway train was crashing at full speed into the obnoxious coach, which was sadly smashed by the force of the collision. The horses were drawn in every inconceivable and impossible position of frantic alarm,

The coachman was hurled into mid-air, and the guard was laid on his back, blowing a lugubrious blast through his horn, from which a thin white cloud was issuing with this legend on it, "The 'Highflier' is a Low-lier." The "Netherborough Arms" had not grace enough to forbear an ill-natured retort—there are few people who have, more's the pity—and so it made answer in its wrath, "Not the 'Highflier,' but Peter Ransdell!" Now Peter Ransdell was mine host of the "Grapes."

It was very naughty and very rude, and it will be seen from this little episode that Netherborough folks had all the failings common to poor weak human nature. Mine host Sampson, of the "Netherborough Arms," ought to have been well scolded for his spiteful sentence, but then, let him who is innocent of this despicable trick of the tongue cast the first stone.

At the hour of three, or soon afterwards, an open carriage with four horses came rolling through the main street of the town, driven in dashing style by a coachman in brilliant livery. Two footmen, clad, as the old song says, in garments gorgeous to behold, stood behind, keeping guard over the occupants of the carriage. These were Mr. and Mrs. George Huddleston, together with Miss Huddleston and the young Lord Seaton, son-and-heir of the Right Honourable the Earl of Thaxendale, who, it was said, was a suitor for the young lady's hand and heart. People said—but then that is poor authority—that the impecunious young patrician would have been content to get on without either, if he could have their full value in railway shares. Judging from appearances, his lordship, on the other hand, was not likely to be much of a bargain at any price.

The railway king was a somewhat short, stout personage, whose general appearance made it tolerably evident that he had "sprung from the ranks." Shrewdness and energy were depicted in every line of his face, and so was geniality and

good nature. Those who were most intimate with him spoke warmly of him. Most people do so speak of those from whom they hope to receive great things, and railway shares were great things and precious in those days, and his majesty held the bestowing of them in his own right hand of power.

While the great man and his party were partaking of some light refreshments at the "Netherborough Arms," quite a crowd had gathered in front of the inn, standing with straining eye and ear to catch sight or sound of the illustrious guest within. Some of the rudest and most daring flattened their noses against the windows, if haply they might catch one poor glimpse of the profile of the monarch of the railway world. And what wonder? For at that time George Huddleston was supposed to have in his possession the philosopher's stone that turned all he touched into gold, red gold! Not only the general public, but lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, aye, princes and princesses, crawled and fawned about the feet of the golden idol whom their cupidity had set up on high, and worshipped as a god. All this was the shameful truth full fifty years ago.

At last the eventful hour arrived, the carriage was at the door. The great man's appearance was greeted with a deafening burst of cheers. Then the eager crowd followed the carriage at a run, as it led the way to the green fields and the chosen spot where the first sod was to be turned in state of the new railway, which was to link Netherborough with the city of York, and with the open markets of the great world outside.

I have no space to narrate in detail the historic events that followed. Are they not written in the columns of the *York Herald* of that period? The Rev. Septimus Bartley, vicar of Netherborough, rotund, rubicund, and genial, standing with a select few within an enclosure of ropes and stakes, presented Mr. Huddleston with an address, and a

few added words of welcome. The contractor for the line presented the hero of the hour with a "silver spade." A little polished wheelbarrow, constructed for the purpose, was placed, with its dainty wheel upon a plank, the "sod was cut in a workman-like manner," so the reporters wrote, and was placed in the barrow for removal. His Majesty wheeled it along the plank, and overturned it at the appointed place with a smile and a nod that roused afresh the crowd to cheer. No navy could have done it better, most likely not so well.

Mounting a platform, improvised for the purpose, Mr. Huddleston delivered a short and stirring speech. He congratulated the townfolk on "this auspicious turn of the tide of fortune, and predicted a rapid rise in the trade of the town and district. He referred to the fact that he had become a near neighbour as the purchaser of the Debenham estates, and gave an earnest and truthful promise to do his best to promote the interests of the good town of Netherborough." Mr. Norwood Hayes proposed a vote of thanks to their honoured visitor in his usual graceful and winsome style, and using, as he always did, words apt and fit and few. This was seconded by Dr. Marcus Medway, whose local popularity was based on his professional faith in port wine, which he freely prescribed and inbibed. Indeed he was accounted to be at his best and cleverest when moderately under the influence of that stimulating inspiration. Alas, for certain of his patients, the moderation often failed at need. Dr. Medway cut short his remarks with the intimation that a banquet was impending, and that a supply of ale *ad libitum* was awaiting the patronage of the crowd, "free, gratis, and for nothing." A treble volley of cheers was the least return that could be made for such a peep into a prospective land of bliss.

At this point Miss Alice Hayes, a young lady of eighteen summers, stepped forward and presented a big bouquet.



almost as sweet and lovely as herself, to Mrs. Huddleston, who received it with a bow, a smile, and a blush, though the latter perhaps was not distinctly understood by some of the lookers on. Then the "Netherborough celebrated brass band," with more metal than music in it, played "God save the Queen," and that portion of the ceremonial came to an end.

The crowd dispersed. The select hundred and twenty, who had tickets for the banquet, retired to get ready for the evening's ceremonial, which was to be held in the big club-room of the Netherborough Arms. The crowd in general found their way to "The Green," which had become a veritable land of Goshen, where beef and beer and bread and cheese and ale were waiting to satisfy the hunger and to quench the thirst of all who chose to put in their claim.

## CHAPTER IV.

OLD Aaron Brigham had been an intensely interested spectator at the afternoon's proceedings, but there was quite a shadow on his dear old face as he retired from the spot, and his white head was bowed as if the heart within him had been made sad. He was overtaken by Mr. Norwood Hayes.

"Well, Aaron," said he, "this is a good day for Netherborough, isn't it?"

"Why," said the old man, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, "I isn't so sure about it, as I was a bit since. I'se a good deal trubbled in my mind. Don't yo' think it was a bit heathenish, all that? Was there none o' yo' that felt like askin' God's blessin' on it? Didn't you niver read about the man that put his money in a bag full of holes? I did think o' puttin' a bit o' money into the railway myself. I hev'n't much, as you know; but there's a lahtle lassie that I'se varry fond of, an' I thowt it might help her some day. But if God has rowt to do with it, it's a bad investment, an' it won't do neither for Kitty nor me."

"Why, you see, Aaron," said Mr. Hayes, with a little laugh, though as a Christian and a deacon he felt a little bit uncomfortable. "A railway isn't exactly a religious thing, and—"

"Then it's an irreligious thing, an' neither you nor me has any business with it. The devil niver hit on a cleverer device than when he got folks to call some things 'worldly things,' an' other things religious. Why, the very world itself is the temple o' God, isn't it? An' there's nowt that owt to be goin' on it that isn't according'y. I teks my

hymn-book when I go to chapel ; and I teks my spade when I go to work i' my garden ; an' I try to praise God wi' both of 'em ; and I don't see that one of 'em's more religious than t'other. If it's right to have a railway, it's right that God should hev a hand in it ; His blessing will be like the wind in the mill-sails yonder—just the thing to make it go."

"Well, well, no doubt you're right," said Deacon Hayes, "but—"

"Aye, aye, that's just it," said Aaron, striking his stick upon the ground ; "it's right, *but*, an' the enemy o' souls sprinkles them 'buts' so thickly that the 'right' is smothered out o' life like thin corn in a bed o' couch-grass. O, Mr. Hayes, when will folks, an' specially religious folk, do what's right an' stick to it, an' leave the devil to use all the 'buts' hisself."

"Still, you will own that it's a good day for Netherborough?"

"I'se not so sure on it," said the straightforward old puritan. "You've not been content wi' leaving God oot o' the day's proceedings, but you've ta'en a bit o' special trubble to bring the devil into 'em."

"What do you mean, Aaron?"

The old man stood still, laid his wrinkled hand on the arm of his companion, and said,

"Mr. Hayes, what is the one great curse of Netherborough? What is it that has made this little market-toon notorious, all the way to York on one side and all the way to Hull on t'other."

"Why, intemperance, I'm sorry to say," was the reply. "There's no denying that."

"An' yet on this good day for Netherborough, as you call t, you've arranged for more than a hundred and twenty of your toonsmen to eat an' drink till midnight or the snall hours of the mornin' ; an' you can mention the names of as many of 'em as will take twice across your ten fingers

to tick 'em off who are sure to croon the festive gatherin' by being carried home dead drunk! Worse than that, you've rolled whole hogsheads of strong ale on to the Green yonder for free consumption, an' before nine o'clock to-night scores of men an' lads an' women an' lasses will be reeling drunk or lying daft and senseless about the streets. That an worse things that I won't mention are to be the crownin glory of this good day for Netherborough, and what the newspapers will call the festivities of the occasion! An' a cieryman and a deacon are to the front of it all. You've kept God oot, an' you've brought the devil in, and I don't envy you your pillow, Mr. Hayes."

It was a strong talk, and, for old Aaron Brigham, a very long one; but this Christian of strong moral fibre and old-fashioned strictness of principle, was angry and indignant, and was filled with sorrow as he thought upon the scenes on which the pallid moon would look down on the midnight of that memorable day.

Mr. Norwood Hayes, good man, did not feel much like talking just then, which was much to his credit, for he could not in his conscience deny the truth of the allegations, and he was too manly a man to make light of what the old patriarch felt so keenly. Just as they were turning out of the Town-close towards the Green, the bonnie-faced, ill-clad, little mite whom old Aaron had lifted into his arms on Sunday morning, came shyly up to them, and looking askance at Mr. Hayes, as though she feared to intrude, placed her rough, red little fingers in the old man's hand, then looked him in the face with, oh, such an anxious look, and said,

"Ha' yo' seen anythin' o' feyther."

"No, my dear," said the old man, with a tender cadence in his voice, "not this afternoon. I saw him this mornin' an'," said he, lowering his voice, "he was all right then. I'll go an' look for him."

But little Kitty shook her curly head, and turned to scan the pathway for any sign of the object of her search.

"Thank you," she said, sighing as she spoke, "but nobody'll do but me. I want to tek' him home. He won't go wi' nobody else. Mebbe, he won't go wi' *me* to-day."

No, little Kitty, not even for you will "feyther" go home to-day, for is it not a "good day for Netherborough?" And are there not barrels of strong ale running, sparkling and free, on Netherborough Green? Old Aaron evidently felt the force of the little maiden's fear, for again he lifted her in his arms, and this time he whispered in her ear a few words, which had become familiar to the child from his lips.

"Jesus helps me, always will :  
I will trust in Jesus still."

"Noo, then," continued the old man, still whispering, "say it to me, Kitty, if yo' mean it."

In a moment the child's red little lips were at his ear, and the gleam in her eyes told that she meant it, as she repeated the words,

"Jesus helps me, allus will :  
I will trust in Jesus still."

Then she waited with her ear attent for the words she knew were coming. And they came, a precious message from the orphan's Helper, by the mouth of His servant, Aaron Brigham,—and, whispered as the aged lover whispered them, there was the voice of the gentle Jesus in every word.

"Tell my darling little Kitty  
All my love and all my pity,  
Help her? Yes, I always will,  
Kitty darling, trust me still."

Before Kitty Smart was released from the old man's arms, the little private service being over, Mr. Norwood Hayes

had passed on, wondering at Aaron's familiarity with such a forlorn little waif. Not that he would not have been glad to show favour to the poorest, for he was kind-hearted and sympathetic, and had ever an open hand. But what he saw between these two was love. A love which gleamed in the eyes, sounded in the tones of their voice, and made his own eyes glisten, though he was a mere looker on. Suddenly he heard a child's voice crying out loudly,

"Feyther! Feyther! Stop. Ah want yo'!"

Mr. Hayes turned to look, and this is what he saw. Aaron Brigham's "lahtle lassie" was running along the road towards the Green, calling "Feyther!" In the distance was Tommy Smart, making his way with eager step towards the beef and beer—especially the beer. For a while he did not hear, and still held on his way towards the goal of his desires.

Poor little Kitty was growing breathless in the chase. "Feyther!" she cried in a louder key. Smart turned round at once, and Kitty stopped, not willing to go further than was necessary from her dear old friend behind her. Tom Smart approached her with a smile, for he loved his "lahtle wench" as he called her; as he came nearer his brow clouded, for he feared her; she was the only being on God's earth who had any control of him.

Just then the thought of the strong ale on the Green came to him; the laughter of the roysterers who were already enjoying what was as free to him as them fell upon his ears. He stood still. Kitty walked forward to meet him, and then her feyther, rather than face her, rather than dare to gaze into her sweet, but tear-dimmed and reproachful eyes, and rather than be deprived of all that free beer, suddenly turned round without a word, dived down a narrow passage, and Mr. Norwood Hayes heard the sound of his retreating feet as he left his "lahtle wench" standing in the road. and ran away like a truant who, if caught, must

go to school. Can anything in the world but drink make a man such a coward, and at the same time such a cruel crusher of the loves and hearts of those who are nearest and dearest to him?

When Old Aaron overtook his little friend, they sauntered together through the town and along the Southgate all the way to Kitty's "home." And all the way the child wept in silence, unbroken but by sobs which shook her shoulders in their strength. She would fain have spoken, for the sake of her white-haired love, but grief choked her; and it was only after they had got indoors that she was able to say, and then only in speech broken into syllables by sobs:

"Feyther ran away fre' me. Ah don't think he'll tek notice o' me only mair."

Then looking at the "childer," as she called them, and thinking of what the loss of her little authority over "feyther" meant in the way of loss of bread, the "wee white slave" rushed to the old man, buried her head upon his knees, and wept such tears as, when they come from children's eyes, are blood and water, like that which came from Christ's pierced heart. From Christ's pierced heart such tears do come, for so sure "as ye do it to these little ones, ye do it unto Me." Of all the crucifiers of Jesus, surely the most cruel and malignant is strong drink—that "good creature" whom Christians not only tolerate, but patronise and enjoy!

As soon as Aaron Brigham had succeeded in drying the tears of his little friend, he left the house, promising to make it his special business to "look efter feyther." Poor old man. His heart was sad and sore as he made his way to the Green. They say that in old age the feelings grow dull, the sensibilities decrease, and the sympathies decline. I hope this is not a necessary outcome of lengthened years. If it is, I think it would be much better for us to die before the wrinkles come to tell us that the best thing in us is

dead a'lready. In the case of Aaron Brigham, however, most certainly this thing was not true. He had the heart of a child, the sympathy and affection possible to woman, the deep feeling which is one of the best characteristics of true manhood, and all these under the control of the Man Christ Jesus! I knew him, and I aver it to be true.

Nearing the Green, he paced the ground slowly, with eyes down looking, his hands behind his back, and a look of deep trouble on his aged face. Poor little Kitty! That was the burden of his care. He was overtaken by Tommy Smart, who had only just come upon the ground after stealthily following Kitty until he saw her safe indoors. He would dearly have liked to pass the old man in silence; had he seen him earlier, he would have "gone by another way," that favourite route of cowards and wrongdoers.

"Tom!" said Aaron, as soon as he caught sight of him, "If you've the heart of a man i' your breast, yo'll go home to Kitty this minnit. If you don't, I think she'll cry her heart oot, poor bairn."

Tommy Smart elected to take a bold style with the old man. "Nonsense, Aaron. The lahtle wench is all right, only let her be. You an' me's a'most ower late. You'd better stir your owd pins a bit. Them as gets on t'ootside o' the crood, are allus t' worst off at times like these. I should like to get into the middle myself."

"Aye, and as near the barrels as yo' can get, I'll warrant, you poor simpleton. Tom," he continued seriously, "they say that this is a good day for Netherbrough, but it'll be a bad day for a good mony o' yo'. It *is* a bad day for thy pretty lassie. O Tom, Tom, thoo'lt be the death on her. She'll die of a heart-break! There's sin an' trubble bein' sown to-day that'll bring a harvest o' shame an' sorrow that'll take mony a long year to reap. It's a parlous thing that such a day as this should end i' guzzling and wine-bibbing, and all that hat sort o' thing leads to. But I'm



most trubbled about thoo, Tom, not only for thy own, but for Kitty's sake."

At this point Aaron laid his hand on Tom's arm. The thirsty soul was starting off, anxious alike to get out of the old man's reach, and to get, as he said, "in the swim."

"Tom," said Aaron Brigham, "go wi' me ; go home wi' me to my house. I'll give you as good a meal o' meat, an' as good a cup o' tea, and as good a pipe o' 'bacca, as yo' ever had i' all your life ; an' I'll put something into a basket for yo' to carry home to Kitty and the childer." But Tom was not to be bribed off the Green at any price that honest Aaron could afford to pay.

"No, thank yo', Aaron, not for me," he answered lightly, "I'se varry much obliged to yo', I'se sure ; but it isn't good enough. It's seldom that a poor fellow like me hez sitch a chance o' gettin' a big drunk on sitch stingo stuff, an' all for nowt, an' I shan't miss it. There's plenty o' bread an' beef there, if I happen to be hungry ; an' there's butts an' hogsheads an' gallons of Carter's treble X waiting to be drunk, an' I'll ha' my full share on it, whatever fool turns his back on it. Good neet."

So saying, the poor drouhty victim of the drink thirst hasted on. The old man looked after him with sorrow in his eyes as he turned away, saying to himself, "'Till a dart strike through his liver. As a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.' To-day, the first sod's been cut for a new railway, and to-night the first sod will likely enough be cut o' many a grave : an', I'se sadly 'feared, the grave o' mony a soul."

## CHAPTER V.

WHEN Alice Hayes had returned to Throstle's Nest, she began to retail to her mother, in voluble speech, the great events of the afternoon, in which she had taken part.

"O mamma!" said she, "we have had such a lovely time of it! Mr. Huddleston, let people say of him what they will, is a perfect gentleman. Well, not exactly perfect, you know; but perfect considering his—what-you-may-call-it—his origin, and—all that, you know. Mother, don't you think there's a lot of sheer nonsense about all that sort of thing? What's origin to do with it? 'A man's a man for a' that.'"

"Don't you think that *you* are talking a good deal of sheer nonsense, Alice? I wish you would not run on so. You give me the headache, or rather, you make the one I have twice as bad, and that is needless, goodness knows. Take your hat off: sit down and be quiet."

"Quiet, mother! Who can be quiet on such a day as this? Nobody ought to, for, as papa said in his speech, 'this is an epoch in the history of Netherborough;' and didn't they cheer him when he said it; and—oh, I was going to tell you—Mrs. Huddleston took the bouquet I presented to her so nicely and sweetly, and said, 'Thank you very much, my dear.' She's a dear, I'm sure she is, and she's going to have a ladies' party, and—"

"Alice, dear!" said Mrs. Norwood Hayes, raising herself languidly from the sofa on which she was reclining, "Excuse me, but I really must ask you to be silent. If

you must relieve your mind by talking, go into the kitchen and tell Eliza and the cook all about it. They'll listen hard enough, and it really does not interest me, or rather, to put it more correctly, I am far too unwell to attend."

So saying, the languid Mrs. Hayes sank back upon the cushions of the lounge, on which her limp form was bestowed; she allowed the "drooping curtains of her eyes" to fall, and reverted to her normal condition of "general washed-outness" in which her daughter Alice declared she spent her days; so she spent, also, the patience of other people, which was very dishonest of her, for that sort of coin ought always to be held in keeping by the owner.

It is true that there were times when there was a bright gleam in those light blue eyes of hers, and certain well defined patches of colour on her cheeks. At such times: s these she was very plentiful of speech herself, speech both "voluble and vacuous," that wicked Dr. Marcus Medway said. He ought to know, for it was given to him to hear the most of it, and not seldom, to join in, as volubly and vacuously as did the lady herself. All this, however, was dependent on what Sidney Smith used to call the "inspiration of the sideboard," and that useful article of furniture was kept carefully locked just now for prudential reasons. A private prohibitory act had been passed and put in temporary operation at Throstle's Nest.

As soon as Mrs. Hayes had thus effectually put the stopper on Alice's flow of speech, that young lady jumped from her seat and bounced out of the room, with a good deal of avoidable noise, had she been so minded. She twirled her hat round by its ribbon strings as an additional outlet for her feelings, and sought more kindly and congenial companionship with 'Liza and the cook. It was something to her credit that she did not answer her mother with sharp words, for she was well able, and self-control under such circumstances is not easy.

She was a bonny lass, this young Alice Hayes ; and now that the day's engagements had given brightness to her eyes and roses to her cheeks, she was, as the cook said, "A perfec' pickshur." If you could have seen and heard her as she told the sympathetic servants all about the turning of the first sod, you would not have wondered that Walter Bardsley, one of the most prominent and promising young men in Netherborough, regarded her as a prize to be wooed and won and held for life.

I am afraid this fresh, healthy, high-spirited young lady of eighteen summers, had not any very great amount of sympathy with her lackadaisical mother, who spent much of her time on the sofa, seeking to relieve the insipidity of life—on the homœopathic principle, I suppose,—by loitering through perpetual volumes of insipidity in the shape of novels from the circulating library. Mrs. Hayes varied the monotony of her colourless existence by indulging in wine and other alcoholic stimulants whenever she could get them. It had come to be necessary to put her under the stress of certain definite limitations in this direction. When the deprivation was most felt, she was most ailing. Her nerves were then the most delicate and most finely strung, and her favourite enemies, palpitation of the heart and distracting headache, necessitated a relaxation of the bonds that kept the wine-cup from her longing lips.

Poor Mrs. Hayes ; sad type of ten thousand English mothers ! And poor Alice Hayes, with only such a mother to pilot her through all the fateful years of girlhood, when the path is shapen, ill or well, for all the pilgrimage of life.

As Mrs. Hayes lay among her cushions, listlessly turning the pages of the second volume of "Almira ; or, the Secret Bride," the door of the sitting room was gently opened, and a tall, good looking well-proportioned youth entered. There was a smile on his pleasant face, which beamed with

intelligence and good humour, as he passed over to the reclining lady, and gently kissed her forehead. Mrs. Hayes' face lighted up at the sight of him.

"Well, Cuthbert, dear, so you've found a moment to come and tell your mother of the doings in the Town Close. Has everything gone off well?"

It was evident that "Cuthbert, dear," was on a different footing with his mother than was the young lady who had been so effectively dismissed.

"First-rate, mammie," was the cheery reply. "I wish you had been there to see," and in a few brief sentences he described the programme of the afternoon.

It was only at the close of his lively narrative that Mrs. Hayes relapsed into her lethargic condition.

"O, Bertie, dear," she said, in a weak, weary voice, "lay your hand on my head. Thank you; how deliciously cool! Yes: I should liked to have been there with you. But," she continued, with a sigh, as she turned wearily on the sofa, "such enjoyments are not for me. It is mine to suffer, suffer, suffer. I feel as if I should glide swooning out of life," and as she spoke, she looked it every whit; and sympathetic Bertie was distressed to see her.

"Poor dear mammie," he said, "can I do anything for you. I wish I could stay with you; but I must go back to the office; father, you know, is busy to-day."

"Don't trouble, darling. I'm used to solitude, and I would not like any living being to be saddened with such sorrowful company as mine, much less my Bertie."

Mrs. Hayes dearly loved her boy, loved him in very truth, and yet at that moment she was looking to him to turn the prohibitory lock and give her the stimulus without which she felt that she must die!

Bertie sat a moment, thinking, and it was thus he thought: father is going to the banquet, I'm going to the cricket-field, Alice will be at the Bardsley's. Mammie must not be left

like this. I will give her a glass of sherry, it will cheer her up a bit till some one of us returns.

"If you have *one* good glass of Madeira, dear, do you think it would do you good?"

"I think it would," was the reply, given in a faint whisper. Cuthbert left the room, leaving the door open behind him, crossed the hall, and entered the dining-room which was just opposite. Having taken the side-board key from its secret nook, he filled a wine-glass with the coveted sherry, and bore it to his mother.

There was a strange pallor on her cheek as he re-entered, her hand was held upon her forehead, and lines of pain were drawn across her face.

"O, Bertie, dear, just run up to my bedroom and get me the strong salts from off the dressing-table. Quick, please."

Cuthbert put down the glass, and went on the desired errand. In an instant Mrs. Hayes rose from the sofa, and passed out into the dining-room with an agile and cat-like tread. As she expected, the side-board door remained unclosed. To abstract a bottle of brandy, about half full, from its place, and to fly back to her place on the sofa, was barely half-a-minute's work. When Bertie returned she was lying languidly as before, with the stolen spirits hidden beneath the cushions of the lounge.

"I can't find it, mammie," said Bertie, as he handed her the glass of wine.

"Never mind, dear, I'm better now;" but as she spoke her breath came and went in short spasms, a hectic flush had come upon her cheek, caused by her excited chase for drink, and for a few moments Cuthbert stood, uncertain what to do.

"You had better lock the side-board, Bertie," she said. "It does not do to be careless in such matters where there are servants about. I shall be all right now."

That fiction about the servants was Mr. Norwood

Hayes' little stratagem for avoiding any humiliation to his wife by the locking up of the decanters. A very kind and thoughtful man was Mr. Hayes.

"I shall be all right now," Mrs. Hayes had said to her son as he retired. That evening, while Bertie was handling bat and ball, enjoying life to the full with merry comrades in the light of the setting sun; while Mr. Norwood Hayes was banqueting at the "Netherborough Arms," and drinking *healths* in "generous liquor," the poor lost mother and wife was found on the floor by the servants, helplessly drunk. They carried her to her bed and laid her on it as they found her, and left her there. Look in upon her for one momer! Her hair frowsy and frumpled, her face red, dark red, but purple in its hue, her eyes partly open, but with no light in them but a stare, her mouth open, and the breath coming in long, stertorous snores, her hands and arms stretched out widely, as if she lay fastened to a cross, as indeed she did, crucified, all that was womanly of her, by that masked and murderous assassin, strong drink. At that very time Mr. Norwood Hayes had the wine-glass at his lips, and was drinking a health "*to the ladies*" in the club-room of the "Netherborough Arms!" Yet Mr. Norwood Hayes was a Christian, the deacon of a Christian church, and a good man. I, who knew him, repeat it and affirm it—a very good man indeed.

Yet surely, surely, there was something wrong somewhere. What was it? Let the Christian reader of this fact from real life tell us where was the wrong, and who was answerable for it before God and man?

Mr. Hayes was quite a pillar of the nonconforming church that worshipped in "Zion" Chapel, and with which Aaron Brigham had been allied for full threescore years. He had no strong temptations to contend with, and was often led to wonder how it was that he had no weaknesses of the flesh that some good men have to

struggle with as if for dear life. He was a strong-minded man. He could take his one, two, or three glasses of wine or other alcoholic beverage with impunity ; and he had nothing but strong words and some measure of contempt alike for those who could not drink moderately, and for those who would not drink at all.

"What is wine for," he would say, "but to be drunk, and what is a man worth if he has not grit enough to push the bottle away when he has had enough ? There's reason even in the roasting of eggs."

Of course such reasoning as this was unanswerable. There was the ring of common sense and self-government about it that demanded assent, and that touch about the eggs had some mysterious and occult force in it that made opposition to appear contemptible.

Mr. Hayes had a way with him, a winning and convincing manner that had a silencing effect of themselves. He spoke in tones that were tuned to honesty through all their gamut. He was a man of great local influence, and, as I have said before, a good man, and an honour to "Zion," of which he was the stay and the pride. His daughter, Alice, was proud of him, as she well might be. She was proud of his manly figure, of his superior intelligence, of his eloquence, and aptitude of speech. She often affirmed that if her father's lot had been cast at York, instead of Netherborough, he would most assuredly have become lord mayor of that ancient city.

Is there any wonder, then, that young Walter Bardsley, head over ears in love with Alice, saw in her father a model man, a man worthy of imitation, and, indeed, it was seen and known of all men that this fine young fellow had chosen Mr. Norwood Hayes as a pattern man, after whom he might well shape his own social and public life. Not that Walter Bardsley held his model to be perfect. According to his strong judgment, Mr. Hayes had one fault, and that a



serious one—he was not a total abstainer. Walter had strong views on this subject, and did not hesitate to publish them, though a “fanatic” of that sort, fifty years ago, had no easy time of it.

“If only Mr. Hayes would come over to our side on the drink question,” Walter used to say, “he would be a man without a flaw.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

**I**T was quite impossible for blithe, light-hearted Alice Hayes to stop long indoors on that eventful summer's day. So after having regaled 'Liza and the cook with a full, true, and particular account of the afternoon's ceremonies, she donned her hat again, and went forth to compare notes with her chosen friend, Jennie Bardsley, over a quiet cup of tea.

As the Bardsley family are bound to have much to say and do in this drama of real life, it will be well to have them before us once for all. Old Richard Bardsley—Ricky Bardsley was the name by which he had been known in his own generation—was a drysalter of established name and position in Netherborough. His business had been built up by himself, and in such vigorous fashion that when the old man died his three sons found it good enough and strong enough to maintain all three of them, and so they went into partnership, and the firm of Bardsley Brothers, drysalters, etc., was now considered to be as firm a piece of construction as the parish church, and as progressive as the creed of a Chartist, that is to say, the Chartist of fifty years ago.

Of the three brothers Bardsley, Richard, the elder, was a clever business man, and had he been as steady as he was capable, it is hard to say to what pitch of prosperity the business might not have attained. Keen, pushing, energetic, with a quick eye to see an advantage, and ready skill to lay hold of it, and a dogged perseverance that kept it when it was got, Richard Bardsley, as a manager, was worth his

weight in gold. Rather, let me say, would have been, if only he had been independent of the curse of Netherborough, which, through three generations of hard drinkers, still held the Bardsleys more or less in its dread hereditary grip. But Richard and his second brother, Henry, were jovial fellows; free-handed and free-hearted; and as capital boon companions, were ever in request. Both of them were strong, substantial, vigorous young fellows physically, and, though neither of them was remarkable either for strength of mind or extent of knowledge outside the mysteries of drysalting and the sale of it, they were a couple of "likely young fellows," and great favourites with the "set" with which they had socially allied themselves.

Walter Bardsley, the youngest brother, was quite different. Slight in build, and somewhat short in stature, he offered quite a contrast to his more robust brothers. I do not doubt that he possessed a fair measure of business capability, but he thought a good deal less about the trade than they did, and contented himself with the round of duty that came with every day, with no great desire to increase its scope. You had but to look at his thoughtful eyes, his broad intellectual brow, his whole face indeed, to perceive how completely the material in him was dominated by the mental, and how the moral held them both in check.

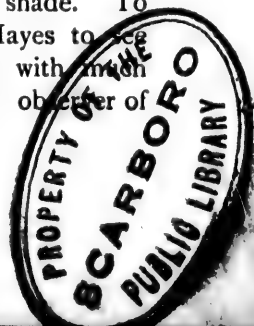
Walter had been a member of Mr. Norwood Hayes' Bible-class, which had met for many years in the larger vestry of Zion Chapel. Then it was that the lad began to admire Mr. Hayes, and begin the process of devotion, that ended in little less than idolatry. Walter was well read; for all the stores of Mr. Hayes' well-stocked library had been placed at his disposal. Books were not much in the Bardsley's line, and the family book-case was ominously innocent of volumes, either of instruction or recreation. While he was still in his teens, Walter had come under the influence of that splendid soul, and noble pioneer in the

great Temperance movement, Robert Gray Mason. He "signed the pledge," and at the date we come to know him, he was a staunch and devoted supporter of the small and feeble Total Abstinence Society, which, like Mrs. Partington's mop before the Atlantic waves, was trying to sweep away the curse of Netherborough. It was a day of small things; still, all honour to the bold and faithful few, though their success was small.

The three brothers Bardsley had two sisters, Annie and Jane. The former was, to all intents and purposes, the mistress of the household, for as yet, none of them had ventured to bind themselves in matrimonial bonds. It is true that the mother, widow of Ricky Bardsley, was still nominally at the head of affairs, but the old lady had been practically superseded by her eldest daughter. She was still "consulted," but as she could seldom leave her chair without assistance, nothing very serious came of that.

Jane Bardsley, or Jennie, as she was called, was at once the youngest daughter and the youngest child. She was a bright, sprightly, and charming young woman of twenty. I am no great hand at describing youthful grace and beauty, and in Jennie Bardsley's case, I will leave the task alone, and content myself with an affirmation. She was said to be the most beautiful girl in Netherborough, and I, who knew her well, am prepared to say the same of her—with one exception!

The Bardsleys lived on the business premises, which were situated quite in the central position of the High Street, and not far from the place where the imposing block, owned by Mr. Norwood Hayes, quite put the old-fashioned drysalting establishment into the shade. To this latter, as I have said, came Miss Alice Hayes to see her friend, who, young lady-like, greeted her with much effusion. Miss Jennie had been a delighted observer of the bouquet incident.



"Why, Alice, you just looked lovely," she said, "and you went through it as easily as though you had been presenting bouquets for a month, to get your hand in. I saw Walter watching you. I tell you, he was that proud, the dear silly goose, that he stood a full inch higher in his shoes at the thought that you belonged to him!"

"O, nonsense," said Alice deprecatingly, but blushing with pleasure, nevertheless. "I don't belong to him yet, and, maybe I never shall, who knows."

"Yes, dearie, who knows," echoed Jennie in a low tone, and half checking a sigh the while.

"What's that mean," said Alice quickly. "Is it for me or yourself? If for me, don't trouble. I've faith in 'my ain true laddie.' If for yourself," continued the chatty maiden, running on as usual, "I saw Reuben Stanford in the crowd this afternoon; but he looked so strange—"

Alice paused in dismay, for the beautiful girl to whom she spoke blushed hotly to the very roots of her hair; then she turned pale as the white roses pinned at her breast, then her chin dropped upon the roses, large tears flowed down her face, and her lips quivered with a speechless ache of heart. The curse of Netherborough was again at work on "that glorious day."

Regretful Alice bit her lip in her vexation. She might have known; she ought to have known what it was that made Reuben Stanford "look so strange." When the tongue runs over fast, says the old proverb, it runs over far, and Alice's had a very free flow, though mainly a harmless one. She sought to turn the current of conversation.

"Are your brothers going to the banquet to-night?" She knew they were, but she must say something.

The only answer she got was a weary sigh, and a half-hopeless look, and the words,

"I hope *he* won't be there."

And yet Reuben Stanford, "the handsome Vet," as he

was called, was just the sort of "social acquisition" that is always in great request at such gatherings as these. Never a finer young fellow passed through the halls of the Veterinary College than Reuben Stanford. Physically, mentally, and in the main, morally, he was every inch a man. This bright young man, who had won the heart of sweet Jennie Bardsley, seemed to win the hearts of all. No club, no public dinner, no charity ball, no anything of a social nature in or around Netherborough, could be called complete without the presence of the genial, witty, handsome Reuben Stanford. This is the sort of man who is pressed to go on to perilous ground for other people's enjoyment and his own danger. These are they who come to be sympathetically spoken of as "nobody's enemy but their own;" but, alas, they have enemies by the hundred, and these are their so-called "social friends!" Friends who worship with them at church on Sunday, and on Monday help to send them to the devil, the grimmest devil that hunts for the souls of men!

Jennie Bardsley had a terrible headache; this brought on a terrible headache; her young companion placed her upon the sofa, and laid the cushions so that she could lie at ease; but what cushion is there on which a breaking heart can lie softly? Scarcely had Alice Hayes retired, closing the door quietly behind her, than the sorrowing girl buried her head amongst those same cushions, and sobbed and wept as though her heart would break.

And why? What was the cause of all this grief? Only this, good Christian friends,—Mr. Norward Hayes was coming along the street that morning just before luncheon time. At his office door he met the Vicar and Reuben Stanford. The former had an ailing carriage horse; the "handsome Vet." had been to see it, and both were now on their way to Bardsley Brothers for the healing drugs required.

"Good morning, Vicar," said Mr. Hayes, who, as we

have already seen, was in unusually cheerful trim that morning. "Come and lunch with me in my private room, I want to talk to you about this afternoon's programme. Come along."

"Thanks," said the Vicar who had pleasant memories of Mr. Hayes' little luncheons at the business office, "but stay, no, I must go with Stanford, here, who is—"

"Nonsense," said the genial merchant, "You'll come, too, won't you, Stanford? You've often promised; now you *shall*."

Of course, on *such* a day, a bottle of champagne must make the meeting merry: and all three "enjoyed it in moderation." Who shall say them nay; shall there be no more cakes and ale? Shall ginger no longer be "hot i' the mouth?" Small blame to you, Mr. Norwood Hayes. And you, O worthy Vicar, what law, canonical or otherwise, shall condemn you?

Reuben Stanford, by the very fact that the others were most moderate and abstemious, was thrust into greater peril. "You really must not leave a half-emptied bottle," Mr. Hayes had said. "We must finish it. Here Vicar, take another glass."

"Not a drop more," said the Vicar, extending a deprecatory palm.

"Then you *must*, Stanford, eh?" said the genial host.

And Stanford did! Yes, and did not seem any worse for it. He and the vicar went on to Bardsley's. There Mr. Bartley, having obtained the required drugs, left him, and so it came to pass that young Stanford was left to his evil genius in the person of jovial Dick Bardsley, with whom he *must* drink prosperity to the new railway about to be inaugurated that day. The drink appetite which had been kept laid and latent in Stanford for well nigh a month of hardly-kept resolve, was fully roused, and thus it came about that Reuben Stanford "looked so strange" at the

ceremony of the turning of the first sod ; and thus it was that the heart of the fair and innocent Jennie was sore with grief and anguish, that her cheeks were wet with bitter tears, and her soul was tortured by an agony of apprehension and nameless dread.

And pray, with all this cloud and shadow, pain and peril, what had the good vicar and the estimable deacon to do ? Am I my brother's keeper ? In these days, it is not only the actual murderer Cain that asks that question, but righteous Abel himself, from whom the Elder Brother, the Brother born for our adversity, in His dear love for the weak and erring, hopes for better things !



## CHAPTER VII.

AT the aristocratic hour of seven, the guests assembled at the "Netherborough Arms," filed into the large club-room of the inn, and sat down to dinner. If the plain and simple-going folks of the town had not been otherwise instructed, they would have called it supper, and would have regarded the hour as quite late enough for that. One o'clock at the latest, twelve o'clock as the earliest, and half-past twelve as a workable medium—these were the notions at Netherborough as to the proper time to dine. I have an idea that Old Parr, Old Jenkins, Old Methuselah, and the other elderly notables, who kept death at arm's length for so long a term of years, must have patronised the good old Netherborough plan. What matter? A supper by any other name will taste as good if proper care be taken as to the provisions and the cook.

In this case there could be no question about either. The "Netherborough Arms" had a reputation to maintain, a county character to uphold, and everyone employed in the kitchen on that day were Yorkshire hands. The guarantee for the quality of the dinner could, of course, no further go.

I shall not attempt to describe in detail the dinner which celebrated the new era in the fortunes of the town. It might only excite desires that cannot easily be gratified, and nothing is to be gained by dilating on the charms of the unattainable. A bygone dinner is as of little present interest as a last year's nest. It is enough to say that Yorkshire appetite did abundant justice to Yorkshire fare, and that the "Netherborough Arms" not only kept, but even added to, the laurels it had already won.

Of course, there was wine, the "red, red wine," and white, too, and champagne, which boasts of a colour somewhere between the two. It is pretty safe to say that fifty years ago a public dinner without wine would have been as rare a thing as a wedding without a ring, and would have been regarded as quite as incomplete. In these days, the average Briton at a "celebration dinner" is quite as great a fool as his forefathers, and never forgets at such times to pour out his libations in strong drink to whatever god or demi-god may be chosen to receive the honours of the day. That would not matter so much if only the votaries, after the fashion of some ancients, poured the liquor on the ground. They pour it into themselves, and many of them find themselves at the last where the liquor ought to be!

I am not in a position to say anything as to the quality of the wine which graced the table at the Netherborough dinner; but I have no doubt that, as in these days, there was sherry compounded, say, of red currants and alum, port expressed from the finest blackberries and logwood chips, and champagne, whose parentage could be traced to gooseberry bushes. All of them adulterated with more or less of the real article, or some other form of alcohol even more potent and deleterious. So long as the alcohol is there—"the thing," as the doughty Scotchman said, "that spins a wee, an' then sets a' things spinnin' mair an' mair"—the rest is a mere detail not to be curiously inquired into.

I can, however, produce a witness, at secondhand, as to the character of the liquors on that great day. On the following day a cluster of loungers, it seems, were standing, as was their custom, at Church Corner. One of them was speaking in envious terms of the happy condition in which some of the "gentlemen" were taken home from the dinner in the small hours of the morning. George Caffer, the painter, who was present, together with his boon companion, Phil Lambert, began to make excuse for them.

Geordie was always ready to excuse lapses of that kind, and was equally ready to "lapse" himself when he had the chance.

"Why, is there ony wonder?" he said. "It isn't o'fen that folks hev' a chance like that. Them that teks's wine ev'ry day don't get that *kind* o' wine ev'ry day, because, don't yo' see, their pockets couldn't stand it. Why, somebody as was there tell'd Phil Lambert, and Phil Lambert tell'd me, that some of it was such first-class stingo that it knocked yo' ower like nine-pins a'most before you knew where yo' was!"

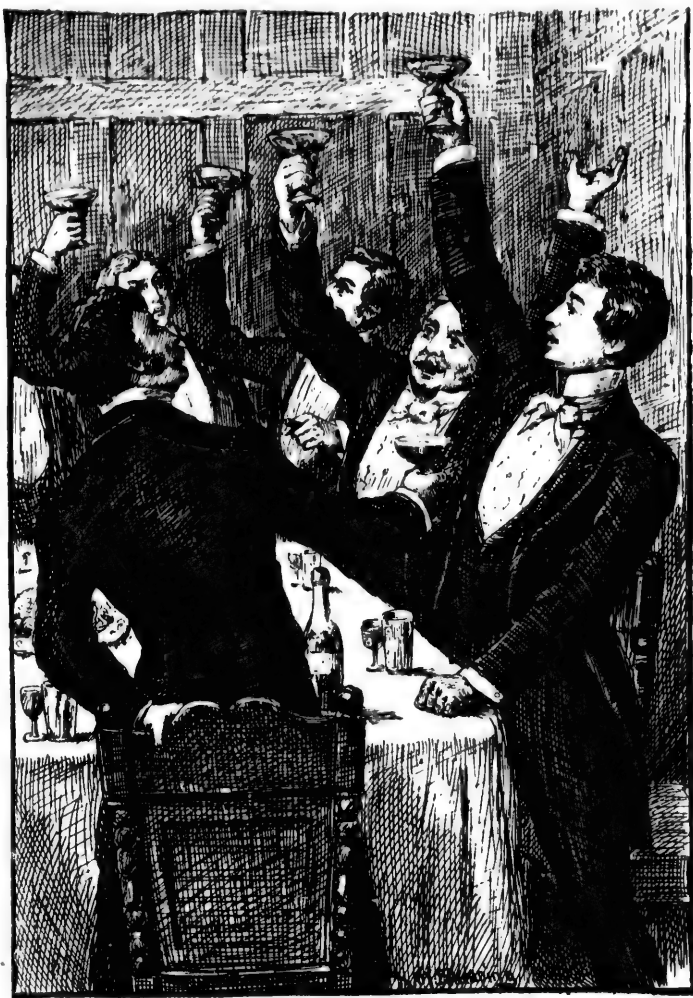
As Geordie uttered these stirring words, he nodded again and again in affirmation of the story.

But to return to the dinner. Of course Mr. Huddleston took the chair at the subsequent proceedings. He did offer to give way in favour of the young Lord Seaton; but that youthful nobleman looked so cowed and frightened at the very thought, that in sheer pity for him the railway monarch ended his troubles and took his own appointed place. Lord Thaxendale's heir fanned his heated face with his 'kerchief as he took his seat beside him, and turning to his next neighbour, he said, in tones which told of the tremor he had felt,

"Really, don't you know, Mr. Huddleston shouldn't come—ah—down on a fellow—ah—like that. It's very exciting; it is really—ah—don't you know?" The force of his lordship's eloquence was exhausted, and he would gladly have taken a glass of wine there and then to get himself pulled together again. That, however, he could not do. The "health of the Queen" had to be attended to first.

What a magnificently hale and vigorous woman her Majesty ought to be, considering the oceans of strong liquor which have been poured down the throats of her loyal subjects as a libation to the gods on her behalf. Under the guidance of the chairman, the whole company went through





"SUCCESS OF THE YORK AND NETHERBOROUGH RAILWAY."  
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this too customary tom-foolery, in which Tom Fool is outdone in his own peculiar province : and every individual toast-drinker becomes a momentary candidate for the cap and bells. That, at any rate, was old Aaron Brigham's estimate of the matter. Returning from "Zion" chapel that night, where he had been attending the weekly prayer-meeting—that was *his* mode of celebrating the "great day"—somebody asked him jocosely if he would not like to drink the Queen's health at the banquet then proceeding.

"I wish the Queen health, long life, and as much prosperity as is good for her, wi' all my heart," said Aaron ; "an' what's mair, I pray for it ; but how ony sane body can 'drink' it, I can't understand ; an' specially to drink it i' that that's knocked both kings an' queens over like nine-pins before they've lived oot half their days, an' is doin' the same wi' thousands o' their subjects until the whole land, from end to end, is becoming like the Potter's Field, a field o' blood ! It's all a device o' the devil to mek drinkin' patriotic an' respectable. Wine is just aboot the most profitable part of his stock-i'-trade, an' toast-drinking, as folks call it, is one of his sample-traps for securin' big orders."

The toast of the evening, however, was "Success to the York and Netherborough Railway." Of course, wonderful things were said of it, and wonderful prophecies were ventured concerning it, and everybody agreed that Netherborough was now on the high road to prosperity. "Richard Bardsley, Esquire," was the name coupled with this toast. It is wonderful what a crop of esquires grow up suddenly, like mushrooms, on occasions of this sort. Richard, or, rather, Dick Bardsley—for that was his working-name—was none other than the elder brother in the firm of drysalters to which I have already referred. He and his brother Walter did not get on very well together. The elder regarded the younger as somewhat priggish, to use his

own slangy mode of speech. Richard was, as we have said, over fond of a "social glass," and Walter's staunch cold water principles and practice were a tacit reproof that galled him a good deal. He felt that the opportunity had come to turn the tables on the teetotaler.

"I am glad, Mr. Chairman, that you have called for a bumper in honour of the toast to which I am proud to respond," said he, at the close of his brief speech. "The railway itself may well be regarded as a bumper, for I am persuaded that it will be a full cup, brimful of prosperity to our town; and even at the risk of a little confusion of metaphors, I will add that it will bump adversity, hard times, and bad trade clean out of Netherborough!"

It need hardly be said that this extravagant prophecy was greeted with uproarious cheers, especially when it is remembered that the "red, red wine," had by this time reddened the faces, quickened the pulses, heated the blood, and muddled the brains of the majority.

"It is surely a fitting thing, Mr. Chairman," continued Richard Bardsley, "that so exhilarating a sentiment should be drunk in champagne; that monarch among wines which has been called 'crown of the vineyard,' just as that generous liquor, port, has been called its 'cardinal.' I have noticed that one gentleman in this present company has thought water to be good enough for the drinking of toasts on this occasion; aye, even that of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen!"

"I don't agree with him! I am persuaded that none of us will agree with him; and, indeed, I, for one, protest against such a mockery of ancient rule and usage, and such a breach of good fellowship. We initiate to day the *best* stroke of fortune that has ever come to Netherborough; the railway has the *best* chairman to be found in England; we have joined in the *best* dinner that was ever served at the 'Netherborough Arms;' we are in the *best* of spirits as

to the future of our town, and I say for one that the occasion is worthy of the *best* of liquor, and that is champagne!"

This ready and taking style of speech hit the exhilarated guests exactly. A tempest of cheers, inebriated ones, greeted the orator as he resumed his seat, and a chorus of voices were heard saying, "and so say we all!"

Young Walter Bardsley was a good deal disconcerted. It was, indeed, a very unpleasant predicament for him to be placed in. He was probably the youngest man in the room, except Cuthbert Hayes, who had stolen in after the banquet to hear the speeches. Walter knew that the eyes of the whole company were turned upon him, the one well-known abstainer there. He knew that he had turned suddenly white, and had then blushed like a school-boy. But he kept his fingers on the tumbler of water he had been sipping, and in a little while self-mastery stilled his nerves, and brought a smile to his face, which showed that he meant to stand by his colours, come what might!

In a little while an unexpected opportunity came to him of replying to the onslaught of his brother Dick. In the absence of the gentleman who had been appointed to "speak to the toast"—"The Trade of the Town," that office was charged upon "Mr. Walter Bardsley!" This suggestion had been made to the chairman by Mr. Norwood Hayes, who was a dear lover of fair-play. He had resolved that the young man should have the opportunity of giving his elder brother a Rowland for his Oliver.

The young abstainer rose to his feet. He was a little nervous. This was the second time he had been taken by surprise, and he had a little difficulty in bracing himself for the task before him. He was a good speaker, quite exceptional in that respect in the Mechanics' Institute of Netherborough, and was said to be a good second even to his mentor and model, Mr. Norwood Hayes. He spoke of



the various trades that were carried on in the town, and testified to the warmth and genuineness of his interest in the prosperity of his native place. He got fairly hold of his audience by his play upon the fact that he was a town lad, engaged in the trade of the town; then he put his heart into the work. He pictured in glowing terms what his dear native place might be as to its homes, its morality, its comfort, its prosperity, and then concluded as follows:

"That is what Netherborough *might* be, like Jerusalem of old, a joy and a delight. But *will* it be? What magic power can work the glorious change? Our renowned chairman has been called the great magician of his day, but does he wield the conjuror's wand that can lift the 'curse of Netherborough,' and brighten its streets and lanes and alleys with glad and happy life?" (Here the railway monarch shook his head). "He himself says, No. Will the new railway bring such Arcadian happiness to the town we love? It may do something for our material prosperity—will do, I do not doubt, but what will be the real gain of that, if the physical and social conditions of the people are not improved?"

"No, I tell you," continued the young orator, "every material force you may bring to bear on Netherborough, will fail to put an end to its crime, its ignorance, its poverty, its squalor, and its shame, until you banish the bottle and put a ban upon the beer-barrel; until you expel the licensed drink-shops from the town they are bringing to ruin, and until it is found that this"—here he lifted up his tumbler filled to the brim with water—"is the *best* liquor in the world,—the true, sparkling gift of God; and in it, and in it only, I drink to a sober Netherborough and 'the trade of the town!'"

Some of the guests cheered the speech uproariously; but then they were so far dulled and dazed with liquor that they did not perceive the drift of Walter's speech, and

would have given uproarious cheers for anything, their own dispatch by the common hangman, say, or a proposal to make a bonfire of the "Netherborough Arms." Others received it in the sullen silence of dismay; and others, such as Dr. Medway, Reuben Stanford, and Richard Bardsley contented themselves with loud shouts of "No, no!" "Nonsense," and short laughs in which they dubbed the speaker tacitly as a fanatic and a fool.

Lord Seaton put up his eye-glass, twirled the corner of his incipient moustache, and whispered to the Vicar on his right, "a dangerous fellow, that—ah—one of those Chartists—ah, wears a white hat, I expect, and—and all that, don't you know."

The Vicar smiled—it's so convenient, that, for who can tell what a smile may mean? It is a handy non-committal kind of response. In this way the good man avoided any condemnation of the heroic Walter, which his conscience forbade him to do; and avoided also any approval which his preference for the conventionalities and usages of social life would certainly have prompted him to give.

There was one fine young fellow present who gazed upon Walter Bardsley, as he took his seat, with undisguised admiration and that was the son of Mr. Norwood Hayes. When Walter happened to turn his eyes in the direction of Cuthbert Hayes, he was greeted with a succession of nods, accompanied by a gleam of the eyes and a smile on the face which said as plain as could be, "You are a hero, and you are right!"

Just at that moment Cuthbert heard his father's voice. He was speaking to Mr. Dunwell, the minister at Zion Chapel, who was retiring, as was also the Vicar, from the evening's proceedings. Probably that much was owing to Walter's honest and courageous witness for the truth. Mr. Dunwell had said something to Mr. Hayes in passing, to the effect that Walter had at any rate the courage of his opinion.

"Yes," said Mr. Norwood Hayes, "Walter's a splendid fellow," and this is what Cuthbert overheard—"if he would only be a little less fanatical, drop his teetotal fad, and go in for teaching the virtues of a manly self-control, he would arrive at the same ends by far less extravagant and indeed impossible means."

"Just so," said Mr. Dunwell, and passed out into the night.

Cuthbert drooped his head and thought the matter over. He said to himself,

"Father condemns Walter's cold water principles. He ought to know. I think he knows everything." As he spoke he looked at his father, and noticed that the wine in his glass had neither increased nor lessened during the last hour. There he sat as self-contained and as thoroughly master of himself as he was at his own breakfast table that morning—all because he was a "man who was king of himself."

Cuthbert, in the first warmth of his feelings had intended to go to Walter, shake him warmly by the hand and say, "I will join you, Walter, and stand beside you under the cold water flag." But now he scarcely thought he would. He dearly wanted to be as good and strong a man as his father, and he would have spurned the idea that anybody could be better. Like his sister Alice, he was proud of him. Father did not abstain, then why should he? Father dearly liked Walter, but he thought him a fanatic. He did not want his father, of all people, to think *him* one. Then again, Mr. Dunwell said, "Just so," to his father's views about it. "No," he said, rousing himself from his cogitations, "I'll remain as I am, able to take care of myself."

His father and his pastor led him to that decision.

Poor Cuthbert Hayes! On that subject I cannot just now trust my pen to write, or my mind to dictate. Wait

awhile, I shall calm down a little by-and-by. His father and his pastor ! The minister and the deacon ! And both of them good men, earnest, honest, kindly, and true !

Walter Bardsley's speech had raised such a hubbub that Mr. Huddleston, the chairman, was glad to create a diversion by calling the next toast.

And so the night went on. Songs were called for, bacchanalian ditties having the preference ; glasses were constantly refilled, the cigars were handed round, and, as an old author says, "reason set to reeling in odd contortions." Finally somebody suggested "The Ladies," though there were none there. Then "Stanford !" "Stanford !" "Stanford !" was noisily called on to respond. The "handsome Vet," whose day's drinking, after well nigh a month's abstinence, began in the company of the worthy Vicar and Norwood Hayes, could, by this time hardly stand upright on his feet. As he stood or tried to stand, by the aid afforded him by the table, Reuben Stanford who was always said to "look every inch a man," looked every inch a sot.

He murmured out a few incoherent sentences ; and then the poor fool, self-made by favour of his comrades, had a sudden inspiration—

"Gen'omen !" said he, "I'm goin' to vencha 'pose a toast — 'The belle of Neth'bro,' Miss Jennie—"

Then up sprung Dick Bardsley, and rushing forward, he angrily pulled the demented speaker backward on the floor. In drunken rage Stanford struck right and left, and Bardsley was ready enough to retaliate. Everybody rose, some to mingle in the fray, and others to leave the room, and still others to gather into a corner and dispose themselves to continue the "evening's entertainment !" Mr. Huddleston, whose somewhat expansive features always had a certain flavour of rubicundity, carried his face, which, as the song says of the "blood-red flag of England," did "most terrific burn," from the scene and he was followed by Lord Seaton,

who was glad to hold by his Majesty's coat-tail as a sort of personal protection. In his case, immoderate indulgence only had the effect of rendering him more imbecile and harmless than was his wont ; that, however, is a condition difficult to imagine or to understand. By two's and three's the guests of the evening reeled out into the streets, and more or less noisily sought their homes, which many of them failed to find, and so abode in the street all night.

So ended the dinner—that celebrated an epoch in the history of Netherborough. Ended, did it? Alas, not yet!

## CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE the selected few in Netherborough were dining and drinking, neither well nor wisely, the lower orders—how much lower?—were equally busy, according to their limits, on Netherborough Green. The bountiful supply of roast beef and bread was disposed of rapidly, and several bulky barrels of strong beer were soon exhausted of their contents. Fresh supplies were continually forthcoming, for the liberal wiseacres, who had provided this questionable gift, were resolved that there should be no stint.

For awhile all went on peaceably and pleasantly. Those who knew when they had had enough or thought they did, strolled off for a walk in the green lanes; or gathered in knots at the street corners, to discuss the new railway in general, and the events of the day in particular. Some few retired to their homes and busied themselves with their own affairs, striving to make up for the loss of the brief holiday they had stolen earlier in the day.

The worthy vicar, thoughtful man, appealed to the men who had charge of the ale-barrels, not to serve out the liquor to boys and girls, but as the custodians themselves were soon too merry to be wise, the well-meant check was of small value. A legal prohibition of the saturnalia would have been a surer safeguard; but Mr. Bartley, like the average Briton of to-day, was content to hope for the best when the gate was set wide open to the worst, and the way was all down hill!

In the course of the evening, contingents of farm lads and

lasses, farmers' sons, and others from the neighbouring villages, joined the roysterers on the Green. At length, the scene that the rising moon looked down upon might well have led her to "fill the horn" no more, for that process as carried on by the mundane fools upon the Green was an uttermost scandal and disgrace. The stage of mild and good-tempered elevation was soon passed; that of boisterous hilarity and rough-and-tumble horseplay succeeded. Passionate quarrels, reckless mischief, and the mad pranks of drunken license followed.

An epoch in the history of Netherborough! The outcome of that now long-distant day was mourning and misery and shame which not only left their mark behind them, but are themselves in evidence at Netherborough at this day. The iron highway is now in operation; it stretches its sinuous length along the plains and valleys, and the iron horse has been careering noisily by the Green at Netherborough for full fifty years. But the dreadful horseman, Care, on his coal-black steed, has ridden with a hardness quite as ruthless, quite as constant, from that day to this. The knell-like clink of those cruel hoofs is heard to-day in sorrowful echoes by Netherborough households who date a life-grief from "the turning of the first sod!"

And yet at this day, the banquet and the beer; the "red, red wine," "the barrel on the tap," are the Englishman's established and favourite method of paying honours to a hero, or of celebrating some great deed or day; and drinking healths and proposing "toasts" is still a fashionable foolery! The devil's game is being played within more decent limits, it is true, but for that result we have to thank the steady and heroic perseverance of the patriots, who, like Walter Bardsley, have borne the Temperance Banner into the heart of the enemy's camp.

When Aaron Brigham reached his own little rose-embowered cottage on the Spaldon Road, he found his

supper, a basin of boiled milk and bread, awaiting him. That peculiarity in his diet had most likely much to do in bringing him to such a ripe old age.

"Solid suppers are sappers," the old man used to say, "an' like a mowthard," by which he meant a mole, "they do their work i' t' dark, an' t' mischief's only seen by the heaps of soil they leave behind 'em, just like new graves in a chotchyard."

Esther Harland was anxiously awaiting him, for not only was the milk cooling fast, but the hurly-burly in the town made her apprehensive that Aaron's non-appearance at his usual time was because some harm had befallen him.

"O, Aaron," said she, "wheriver ha' yo' been? Your bread an' milk's been waitin' for you, I don't know hoo long; and warm milk that's well-nigh cold is a'most as tasteless as warm water. Bless me! hoo wet you are! Is the dew fallin'? Why, your hair's as wet as a dish-cloot. Let me put it in t' oven for you."

"Bless the woman!" replied Aaron, with a smile and a twinkle; "what for? You'll ha' to put my head in with it. I'd do a'most anything to oblige yo', Hetty, but I must draw the line somewhere—"

"Ho'd your noise, you dear owd silly. I meant yer bread an' milk, not yer hair," said Esther, with a laugh, which showed that the air was clear again. "I was frightened that something had happened to yo'."

"Something would ha' happened to me if you'd got my hair an' what it grows upon into the oven——"

Hereupon Esther took his hat and stick out of his hand, patted his bald crown in mock punishment, and placed his milk before him, laughing heartily, as she answered:

"Nay; I'm ower glad to see yo' back safe an' soond, to put yo' anywhere but in your owd armchair. Noo then, put your supper inside you, an' tell us what you've seen an' heard."



On Aaron's face a shadow fell. Before the spoon had reached his lips it was lowered again.

"Esther, my gell, I've seen a feyther run away from his own bairn, and I've heard a bairn cryin' its sweet little heart oot wi' a grief that'll kill her some o' these days." The old man's voice faltered, and tears that do not readily come to the eyes of age trickled down his cheeks.

"Esther," he continued, "I wish you would go an' see lahtle Kitty Smart. I don't expect her feyther'll go nigh her to-night. He's dead drunk i' Smith's coach-house. I got Jack Kelby an' another to carry him there, an' there he'll stay, I expect, till mornin'."

"What made yo' meddle wi' him?" said Esther, sharply. "He's nowt no better than a hog. Let him lie where he tum'les. He isn't worth lifting up." Aaron said nothing, but he sighed heavily.

"What's that for?" quoth Esther, who had a very tender regard for the old man for all her occasional asperities.

"I'se thinkin', Hetty. What would ha' become o' me, if I'd been left to lie where I fell?"

"You? Don't talk such nonsense. You niver tum'led so low as that, an'—"

"Mebbe not; but who kept me from it, Hetty? I was no mair worth liftin' up than any other sinner.

'Twas mercy all, immense an' free,  
An' O my God, it foond oot ME.'

"Hetty! I'm boond to meddle wi' Tom Smart for the sake o' three folk—three different folks," continued Aaron, speaking with low emphasis.

"Who's them?" said Esther, curiously, but not grammatically.

"Why, for the sake o' my dear lahtle Kitty, my sweetheart; bless her! I love the little lassie mair than I

can tell yo', an' for her sake I'll do my best to save Tom Smart."

"An' who else's?" said Esther again, with a grudge against Lindley Murray.

"For the sake o' my Lord an' Maister, Jesus Christ," said Aaron, reverently. "He came to lift us all up, low as we had tum'led. He spent His life i' liftin' the vilest an' the worst, an' he lifted up a prayin' thief as he was dyin', an' took him with Him—up yonder—where I'm expectin' to go when He chooses to lift me up."

The old man bowed his white head in silence. Esther Harland, good soul, knew she sat in the presence of one who did not need to be lifted much higher to reach the throne. Almost mechanically she asked, "And for whose sake besides?"

"*For my own!*" said the old man, suddenly raising his head to look—not Esther only—but the whole world in the face; "I'll neither be a traitor to Jesus, nor a murderer o' my brother, nor will I put i' peril my own immortal soul. So long as I can call Him my Redeemer, I'll try to redeem somebody. So long as the Hand that bears the nail-prints reaches doon to lift me, this hand o' mine shall reach doon to lift my fallen neighbour, an' if"—here he paused, and looked upon the hard and horny palm, and on the fingers crooked with years of toil—"if it be needful that the nails should be driven here before Tom Smart can be lifted, I'm riddy!"

Leaving the old man to himself awhile, Esther Harland made haste to Smart's cottage to see if she could make matters lighter for little Kitty and the children. If she had met with Tom Smart lying in the street, aye, or in the ditch, I think she would have lifted him up for somebody's sake.

A few days after that great day of the feast, the scholars, teachers, and friends of the Sunday School connected with Zion Chapel, had their annual feast. Tea and cake were

provided, and all those delicacies which make public teas in the East Riding so famous, and in a field on the Spaldon Road the happy party held high holiday. The heat of the summer sun was modified by the thin white clouds which sailed slowly along the blue sky ; clouds which after all were so filmy that they could not make it other than a sunny day. The light and balmy breeze that drove the clouds along served only to make the weather more delightful, and, as Aaron Brigham said, with a heart as young as the merry youngsters in their play, it was as if the day had been "made o' purpose," as indeed it was to such a child-like faith in Providence as his.

Among those who presided at the feast itself none looked fairer, none put on a more cheerful guise, none were more popular with the young folks, than Jennie Bardsley. She seemed to be the life and soul of the whole proceedings. Her very presence was regarded as the guarantee of a happy and successful day. The bevy of girls who formed her own Bible-class half worshipped their teacher, and vied with each other as to which should be her most effective helper in attending to the wants and supplying the amusements of the smaller children, whose appetites for both seemed to be in inverse ratio to their size.

It would not be putting the least strain upon the truth to say that Jennie Bardsley was beautiful ; I should hesitate to call her handsome. I suppose she would not have passed scatheless under the severe criticisms of scientific judges if every individual feature was judged alone, but no candid observer could look upon her face, lighted up as it was with the true woman's soul that dwelt behind it, without admiration, and none could know her without adding these to their confidence and esteem. She was seen at her best, perhaps, when surrounded by her youthful companions ; a girl among girls, and yet a teacher to be looked up to, and to be loved. Her summer-hued, small-patterned, and

simple "print" dress, set off her tall form to perfection, and the broad-brimmed summer hat that partially hid her wealth of brown hair, and veiled her dark eyes from the sunlight, gave her an added attraction; and there were many in the gala-field that day who doubted whether "the handsome Vet," handsome as he was, and popular, deserved to be the owner of so fair a prize.

The fair and merry Jennie had a joke for everybody, and her genial manners and ready speech gave quite a cheery cue that everybody seemed impelled to follow. When the tea was over, who but she must organise the games, deal out the skipping-ropes, the hoops, the battle-dores and shuttle-cocks, or bind the eyes of those who groped, amid shouts and laughter, in blind man's buff. And she was equal to the occasion. There were those present, however, who thought, and thought rightly, that she was exercising great self-repression. At times, when she was taken unawares, there stole over her pleasant face an anxious look, a look of pain, and at times of positive fear, as if she were under the influence of some sad foreboding, and tremblingly asked, "What next?"

The worthy pastor of Zion Chapel, Mr. Dunwell, an observant man, had seen this so often in the course of the afternoon, that he felt impelled, with kind intent, as a pastor might well do, to speak to her on the subject.

"Miss Bardsley," he said, in a low and sympathetic tone when no one was near, "I'm afraid you carry a heartache to-day, under all your pleasant seeming. Can a true friend help you to bear it?"

Jennie raised her eyes, which were at once filled with tears, and instantly replied,

"You are right, Mr. Dunwell. Thank you for your thought of me. To tell the truth, I'm sad and miserable on account of—"

Here she paused suddenly, and looked in the pastor's face.

A veil seemed to fall over her tearful eyes, giving a certain expression of distrust—no, not exactly that, say rather of reserve, to her bonnie face, "Forgive me," she said in a voice that had a mournful cadence in it, "I'd rather not tell you. Still I thank you."

Here a swarm of little ones out of the infant class gathered round her skirts, and under cover of their importunity, she turned away. What thought was it that flashed on the mind of Jennie Bardsley, and intercepted the confidence she had begun? What was it she saw, or thought she saw, in the pastor's kindly face that thrust back into her heart all the numbing ache that she thought to lessen by submitting it to the wholesome and soothing touch of a minister of God? *What was it?*

## CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Reuben Stanford, the "handsome Vet.," was removed from the "Netherborough Arms" to his own lodgings on the night of the great banquet, he was all but helpless with drink, excitement, and the sore handling he had brought upon himself in the scuffle that followed his rude and unseasonable "toast." The next day he could not leave his bed. Had he even been able, he would not for very shame's sake. His whole system, physical, mental, moral, was taking vengeance on him for yesternight's sin and folly. His head was dull and stupid, and ached so that he felt scarcely sane. His mind and memory were in a daze, and the more he struggled to realise the miserable facts, the more he called himself a coward and a fool.

He vainly tried to take the cup of tea and the slice of dry toast his landlady had supplied him with. Without his knowledge she sent for the doctor, perfectly persuaded in her own mind that her lodger was seriously ill. Had Dr. Marcus Medway been his usual medical attendant, Mrs. Crouch would never have summoned him unless under orders so to do. That notable, or rather, notorious, individual would most certainly have prescribed for him "a hair of the dog that bit him"—a strange fashion, surely, of treating the *rabies* of strong drink!

Dr. Julius Preston, a young and clever surgeon, who had but lately taken up his abode in Netherborough, was a man of another spirit. He ordered his patient to bed, put an absolute embargo on alcohol in any form, and gave him to

understand that he might be up and about in a day or two if he would do as he was told.

Reuben Stanford was not submissive. He was a refractory patient, and so it came to pass that on the day of the school feast he was "not at all himself," to quote his own way of putting it. As he was paying scant attention to the late breakfast Mrs. Crouch had prepared for him, a special messenger came to summon him to Horton Hall. Squire Langley's favourite riding mare had met with an accident, and the presence of the Vet. was instantly required.

"You surely don't think of going, sir, do you?" said his landlady, a motherly body, for whom he had much regard.

"I must go," he said, beginning at once to attire himself for his journey.

Scarcely had she left the room, fully aware that further entreaty would be vain, than Stanford helped himself to a "stiffish" glass of brandy and soda, a prescription which he had found useful when he had been "all to pieces," as he called it, after special indulgence. He knew that it would "pull him together," and bring him up to his normal level for a while. Without pause he swallowed the "ruinous restorer," and soon felt himself to be "quite another man."

As he paused in the hall to put on his spurs, Mrs. Crouch again appeared, and noting that his hand shook as he buckled the spur-straps to his heel, ventured one more remonstrance.

"Mr. Stanford," said she, "I'm sure you ought not to go. Dr. Preston wouldn't let you, if he knew."

"Dr. Preston couldn't help himself any more than I can,"—then noticing her really anxious face, he continued: "Don't trouble, Mrs. Crouch. There's no help for it, and, indeed, I feel that a smart ride will do me good. Squire Langley is far too valuable a patron for a young man like me to lose. I'm all right; and if I wasn't," he con-

tinued, with a laugh that had no ring in it, "needs must, you know, when Old Somebody drives."

"Old Somebody, as you call him," said candid Mrs. Crouch, "hasn't any need to drive you, Mr. Stanford. You gallop his way on your own accord. O, sir! when will you stop?"

"When I get there, I suppose," he said, half angrily, half despairingly, and turning on his heel repaired to the "Griffin," where his horse was stabled. He paused at the door, however, to fling back a kindly look at his anxious landlady, for he had ever a kindly heart. That look became a treasured memory for many and many a day.

In the yard of the "Griffin" Inn, Reuben Stanford's beautiful black mare stood pawing the ground restlessly, and requiring all the firmness of the ostler's hand to hold it in. Reuben was proud of his steed, and well he might be, for Dark Lady, as he called her, was quite a local celebrity, not only for the uncommon beauty of her form and gait, but for her remarkable powers of speed. There was ever a good understanding between the mare and her master, and it would be hard to say which of them loved the other best.

"Good morning, Marcell," said Reuben to the landlord, who came out to give him greeting. "Dark Lady seems rather lively this morning."

"Why, yes, and small wonder. She hasn't been out of the yard for some days. What's been wrong wi' you?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Reuben, in a tone that implied disgust with the whole subject. "Seedy, I suppose. I've been confounded queer. Just come and alter this curb for me, my hand shakes."

"O, we'll soon put all that right," said Marcell. "Your nerves just want steadying a bit. You haven't got over the banquet yet, I expect. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, that's about the truth of it," said Stanford, too vexed with himself to laugh. "I wish I had been a



hundred miles away," and so saying he threw himself into the saddle with that sort of action that seems designed to come a reckless cropper on the other side. Of all the miseries that ever ask the question, "Is life worth living?" I think a toper with a conscience after a hard bout of drinking is the man who is most warranted in saying "*No!*"

"Stop a minute," said Marcell, and hasting into the house, he speedily returned with a glass of liquor in his hand.

"Here, Stanford," said he, "here's a drop of 'special' for you. It's seven years old if it's a day. It's as mild as milk. There's not a headache in a hogshead of it. Drink it off. It'll do you good!"

"It'll do you good." Take it for all in all, this is probably the most popular lie that the higher civilisation, aided by the religion of goodwill to man, as commonly interpreted, has ever yet produced. From the burglar o' nights who proffers a jorum of gin to a brown knight of the jimmy, with a big swear to recommend it, to the pious host who proffers a glass of "red, red wine" to the minister who has just returned from service, and is supposed to need a pick-me-up, "It'll do you good" is the favourite lie of the classes and the masses in this land of ours. It is the only quack medicine in the world where the doctor and the patient take the physic together, look each other in the face benevolently, and say, "Your health!"

The handsome animal that Stanford bestrode, as if glad to feel her master's weight, and eager for a scamper, arched her graceful neck, champed her bit, and pawed the ground, longing to be off and away. The ride did Reuben good. He felt better as the milestones passed. As Dark Lady, cantered with him over the springy turf, and under the shady elms, and over the undulating slopes of Horton Park, as the music of the birds, and the hum of the bees among

the limes, and the pleasant ripple of the beck fell upon his ears ; as he bared his head that the balmy summer wind might work its will among his curly locks, and breathe its grateful incense on his brow ; as all the glad possibilities of youth, and strength, and life, crowned with the love of a true woman, rose before him in present vision, the question, "Is life worth living?" resolved itself into a grand impertinence, the ruling pessimism of a fool. The blood was warm in his veins, the light was bright in his eye, and the exuberant spirit within him found vent in song

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## CHAPTER X.

SQUIRE LANGLEY was a man with a hobby, and his hobby was horses and dogs. When matters went well with them, those about him could get on very well with him. If, as on the present occasion, harm should come to any of his four-footed favourites, he raged around like the proverbial bear with the sore head.

"What's amiss, squire?" said Reuben, as he handed the reins of Dark Lady to the groom who was waiting to take charge of her. Squire Langley was striding across the stable-yard; he always did stride when he was in a temper, and always, as now, carried his thick ivory-handled cane on his shoulder, as if it were a spade or a pitchfork. Whenever it was so hoisted, those who knew him best took care to keep well out of his reach.

"Amiss?" growled the squire. "Why, that two-legged ass of mine, Ralph Fenwick, 's thrown my riding mare down the bank by Jingleton Gate, and lamed her for life, and spoiled her beauty into the bargain. The confounded idiot."

"What, Creole?" said Reuben, sympathetically, for he knew the horse and its value. "What a pity! How did it happen?"

By this time they were at the door of the "loose-box," in which the injured animal had been placed.

"Happen!" roared the Squire, flinging wide the door as though he would like to fling it at the head of the offending Fenwick. "Why, as most accidents of that kind do hapœn—in these parts at any rate. I gave the fellows a barrel of treble X to drink the health of the new railway—the sodden

idiots have been bewitched ever since. I've stopped the tap, but it seems they've turned another on somewhere else. The only comfort I have is that Fenwick is mauled as bad as the mare. He's gotten a face with as many lines and colours on it as there is on a county map, and he won't be able to see out of one of his eyes for a month of Sundays. Serve him right. Now then, mare! Wo, my pet! There, Stanford, what do you think of a sight like that?"

Creole certainly was a pitiful sight to see. Her beautiful hide was filled with chalk dust, and clothed here and there with the mire of the ditch into which she had fallen. It appeared that the squire had seen the mare crawling in limping fashion along the park road, and led by Fenwick, whose zeal on the "health" of the new railway had lost him his wits. No sooner did that hapless lover of strong beer catch sight of the burly squire striding across the park in his seven-leagued boots, with his cane ominously hoisted to his shoulder, than he took to his heels and ran as if for dear life, leaving the mare behind him. Creole would not allow anyone but Fenwick to handle her, and so the squire would not have her meddled with until the "vet." came.

Reuben Stanford, like every man that is a man, had a kindly sympathy for dumb animals, and, what is far less usual, had the faculty of almost instant fascination. A few quiet words, a gentle touch, a full look in the eyes, and a little gentle stroking of the nostrils, were sufficient to win from the trembling mare a little whinny of content, and the "handsome vet." had her completely at his will. With his own hands he tenderly and carefully washed and smoothed her ruffled coat. Then he set himself to find the seat of injury, that which made the horse dead lame; and all the while the squire watched him in silent admiration of his dexterity and skill. A severe sprain of the fetlock was evidently the most serious feature of the case; soothing oils were applied, appropriate bandages were

employed, and at last the mare gave another whinny of relief and thanks, rubbing her nose against Reuben's cheek to emphasise her gratitude.

"There, squire," said he, "I think you'll find that the mare is neither injured for life nor robbed of any of her beauty. I'll just give the groom one or two directions, and in a few days you will find she'll be as right as a trivet."

"That's all right, then," said the squire heartily. "I'm uncommon glad it's no worse," and in token of his keen satisfaction, his ivory-handled cane was lowered to its normal position, and he turned to go to the hall.

Reuben Stanford, having hunted the groom up, for he, like a sensible fellow, had thought it best to keep out of the squire's way as much as possible, gave him full instructions as to the treatment the mare required, and then made as though he would have mounted his horse and straightway made off home.

"What, man," said the squire, "you're not going to rush off in that fashion, are you? Come in with me and have a glass of sherry and a biscuit; I should like to hear of the grand doings you had at Netherborough yesterday—come along."

Reuben Stanford held back. "No, thanks, Squire," said he in a half-hearted fashion, for he felt that he had had quite as much sherry as was good for him for some time to come, and yet his exertions had told on him a bit, and perhaps the proffered sherry would act as a pick-me-up and pull him together again. "I'm not altogether up to the mark to-day—"

"Nay, nay; hang it man! We'll bring you up to the mark all right. Besides, we must drink success to the new railway—come along."

Of course he came along, for alcohol saps the moral stamina of its votaries, and robs them of that noblest attribute of manhood, self-control.

The Squire was genial and in his happiest mood, Mrs. Langley was as hospitable as could possibly be, and the sherry was excellent.

"It has been so long in my cellar," said the Squire, "that it may well be called venerable. Help yourself, Stanford, let it die, as is fitting, of a good old age," and laughing merrily at his own wit, he pushed the decanter to his "friend."

The sun was already painting the western sky with evening splendours when "the handsome vet." remounted his black mare and commenced his homeward journey. This time, however, the fresh air and the pleasant motion of riding did not refresh the hapless rider. Once again he was strongly under the influence of liquor, and had he not been a skilled rider whose horsemanship had become almost automatical, Dark Lady would have been dangerously startled by his unsteadiness. As it was, she was nervous and ill at ease. For some miles, however, the home journey was safely prosecuted; the square squat tower of Netherborough Church was well in view, and Dark Lady's comfortable visions of stable rest drew forth her fine going powers to the full. Reuben Stanford was drowsy, and sat swaying in his saddle; he was bending forward as he rode, and the mare on rounding the last familiar curve threw up her head in wanton wilfulness of pleasure, and drove her rider's hat upon his brow. Reuben Stanford was hot tempered. When he was in his cups he was readily aroused to passion. On the impulse of the moment he brought his short riding whip smartly down on the offending head. Like an arrow from a bow the startled animal shot ahead, and literally bolted from under her unwary rider. Reuben Stanford fell like a log, and the next instant the staring upturned eyes of a dead man were gazing stonily into the evening sky.

All that day the bairns had been laughing and romping

as only children can, and to them, surely, the big occasion would be a happy memory. But now, as the evening shades were falling, even the quicksilver nature of youth began to tire and flag, and the elder and more thoughtful ones noticed that their beloved teacher was tired too. Jennie Bardsley had been the life and soul of the children's treat, and though for her, oppressed as she was with a strange sad sense of ill impending, there was but little pleasure, yet all the more she tried to make the hours of childhood happy, and threw herself with a greater heartiness into the spirit of the day, if haply she might find relief from the overhanging dread of the unknown.

It was yet too early to put an end to the day's festivities, and, though tired, the excited children, like *Oliver Twist*, "asked for more."

"There now, children, I am going to sit down a little bit and get my breath, I declare you've nearly run my feet off!" And so saying, she threw herself upon a pile of shawls and rugs, and taking off her hat, wiped her face and fanned herself, and in fun gasped hard for breath.

"Oh, don't! teacher, we're not half tired yet!" cried the younger tyrants, in chorus, amid ripples of laughter.

"Yes, teacher, you shall," cried the more thoughtful few. "You're tired, Miss Bardsley, aren't you?"

"Yes, dears, I am rather, but I tell you what I'll do: if you like, I'll tell you a story."

"Oh, that will be nice!" exclaimed young and old alike. That was even better than the games she had run away from, and in a little while a whole bevy of wee bairns, and lads and lasses of an older growth, were disposed around her waiting to hear the story. But there was no story told that evening.

"Well, now, what shall it be about? Shall it be a fairy story? Shall I try to make you laugh or cry? No, I won't

do that—there are too many sad stories in this world without making any up, aren't there? I'll tell you a nice bright one, and we'll begin in the dear old-fashioned way: 'Once upon a time—'

"Miss Bardsley, you are wanted at the gate."

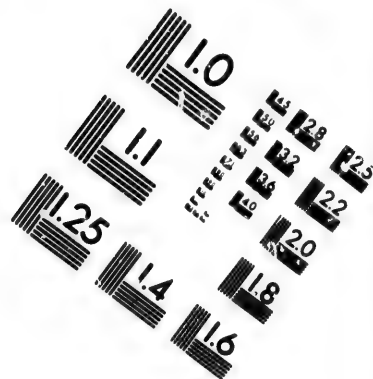
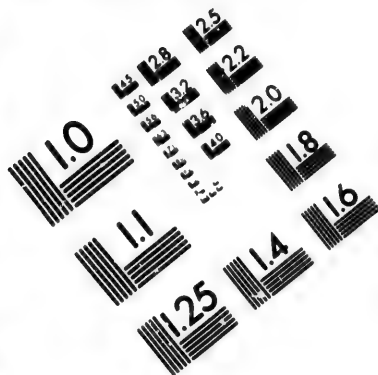
The speaker was the superintendent of her own Sunday School. He always wore a smile when he spoke to her, but now he only just beckoned her from the border of her little audience. His voice quivered with emotion, and his eyes were moist with tears, though the good old man's grey head was bowed all the time, as though he dare not look his gentle well-loved teacher in the face.

The brooding fear and sorrow which had overshadowed Jennie all the day settled down upon her heart. She tottered as she rose, and had to steady herself by putting her hand on the shoulder of one of her girls. Casting her eyes round the field and towards the gate half vacantly, she became conscious that many eyes were looking at her. The night settled down black around her, the sky was gone from her view. Leaning on the shoulder of Mr. Fenton, she said, almost inaudibly, for her voice refused her bidding—"Oh, Mr. Fenton! my darling is dead!" and fell in a huddled heap on the ground.

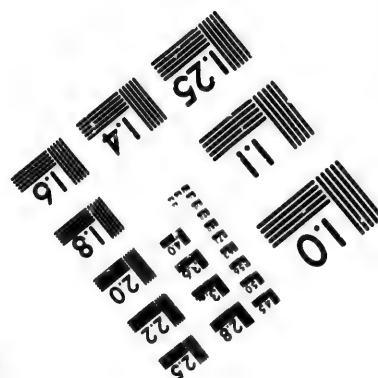
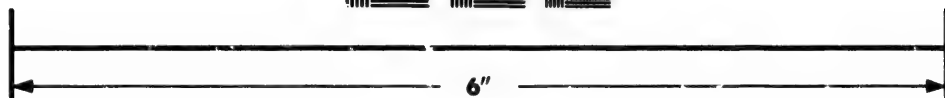
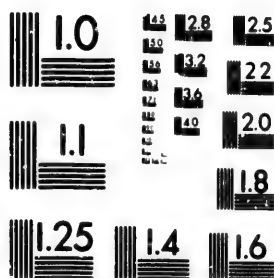
Tenderly, tearfully, lovingly, Jennie Bardsley was carried home. Dark Lady had come to her stable at the inn, riderless; instant search had been made; they had found the body of the ill-starred vet. lying as he fell; and her brothers, coming to tell her the sad news, had judged it better to get her away from the children first. Alas! she had quickly divined it, and it was long before the facts could be revealed. For a long time the stricken girl hovered 'twixt life and death, constantly watched and tended by her close companion, Alice Hayes, who, indeed, would hardly leave her friend's side; and long before her sad, sweet face, white and thin, was seen again outside her shadowed







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chamber, all that was mortal of Reuben Stanford was laid beneath a spreading elm in Netherborough churchyard.

Think you that heartbreaks such as these are rarely met with? What then of the constant chronic heartbreaks of the drunkard's wife and bairns?

## CHAPTER XI.

THE children's treat was over, and even for them the memory of that happy day was clouded with sorrow, though the sorrow was another's, and though many of them were too young to understand its full and bitter meaning. True, the treat had not been greatly shortened, for the night was darkening round when a darker night fell on the sweet soul of Jenny Bardsley. The children were marched in awe-struck silence—a strange, weird silence, when children are stricken dumb—back to the Temperance Hall. The tea that had been provided for them was hardly touched, and finally a few words were said by two or three of the gentlemen who were interested in the proceedings of the day.

The kindly vicar could only refer condolingly to the event that had brought the day to so sad a close, and asked them all to pray for those who had so suddenly been bereaved.

The inquest was held at the Head Inn, because, forsooth, there was not proper convenience any other where. And so in death young Stanford lay in the place where he had often poured out libations to the very god to whom he fell a victim. It is but fitting that the sacrifice should be laid upon the shrine, and Moloch, at his worst, never claimed as many victims as does the genial god of wine.

All knew the ghastly facts, witnesses, jurymen, and coroner, and the lying verdict they brought in was "Accidental death." 'Twas murder most foul, and, the more's the pity, the murder was practically committed in

the house of his friend. No single word was uttered by the jury, no single sentence by the coroner, to hint that this fine, manly, clever, winsome, promising young fellow had been done to death, murdered, by alcohol, and that landlord, comrades, squire, custom, and government were all "accessories before the fact."

In due time the Sabbath arrived, and there was a larger congregation than usual at the parish church, for the vicar's intention was generally known. As a rule, the vicar was not very particular in the preparation of his sermons, nor had he any very scrupulous ideas about the necessity of their being his own. He considered he did all that was necessary if he talked for some fifteen minutes at most on any proper and orthodox subject. An inspiration was a thing he knew nothing at all about. As for making anybody uncomfortable, this was a thing he would never have thought of for a minute; he was far too kind-hearted! This very limited idea of his duty he performed in that "state of life to which it had pleased God to call him," with unfailing regularity. Beyond this he professed to be nothing more nor less than an English gentleman.

On this occasion, however, the kind-hearted vicar was himself deeply touched. He had a great liking for the clever, brilliant young vet., and, in common with everybody else in Netherborough, was greatly attached to Jennie Bardsley. The suddenness of Stanford's death had impressed him greatly, and there was quite an unusual spirit of reverence in the church as he gave out his text that Sunday: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch!"

With a loving hand he sketched the career, the abilities, the bright prospects of the dead man. Spoke of the great number in Netherborough who in the course of nature had expected to reach "that bourne from which no traveller returns," while yet the course of Reuben's life was but half run. But the angel of God had called him home suddenly

without warning, as if to emphasise to those surviving the lesson taught by his text, for "In the midst of life we are in death." He said that the whole town would mourn his loss, and he said right. He concluded his discourse by warning them all to be ready when the Master came.

The vicar knew all the facts of the case, and there was not a member of his congregation of maturer years but knew them too, and yet he never referred in a single word to the dread destroyer that had wrought his ruin, nor lifted a finger in condemnation of those who had partnership before God in the assassination of this youth of promise, and the heart-break that brought sweet Jennie Bardsley to the very borders of the grave.

Of course there were mild and whispered references to the procuring cause of Reuben Stanford's untimely end, nods and knowing looks and inuendos, anything and everything but the honest truth.

Mr. Norwood Hayes had his pastor—the pastor of Zion Chapel—to supper some time afterwards.

"What a sad end that war of poor Stanford's," said Mr. Dunwell, the pastor. "I declare I have not been so upset and distressed for a long time." And there is not a doubt he meant every word he said.

Mr. Dunwell was a man of very considerable powers of mind, more than usually eloquent, even among eloquent men, a master of humour and of pathos, the life and soul of any social or family circle to which he had an entrance. As a preacher he was effective, and could have been more so had he used his powers to the full. Indeed, he was second to none in the pulpits of the neighbourhood, and on the platform he was second to few.

"Yes," said Mr. Norwood Hayes, "he was a fine fellow, was Stanford, and a good fellow; a man with a clever head and a kind heart, a man that meant well, and who was no one's enemy but his own."

One of the biggest lies this that the devil ever coined, and Shakespeare knew better when he makes Polonius advise Laertes,—

"To thine own self be true,  
And it must follow as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

It is equally true that he that is not true to himself, his higher nature and his God, is false to every man, for "no man liveth to himself alone," and the influence we have on those around us can neither be measured nor computed.

"What Stanford wanted," continued Mr. Norwood Hayes, "was stamina, moral stamina, you know. Didn't know when to stop, his social gifts were great, as everybody knows, and of course that brought extra temptations, though to be sure I don't see why it should myself. A man should use self-control in everything, that is true temperance, of which the apostle wrote so highly, and then, of course *that* would be included."

"Yes, quite so ; quite so, by *that*, you refer to his weakness for—"

"Yes, yes, to be sure, we all know poor Stanford's weakness—but let's be to his faults a little blind, for one must speak nothing but good of the dead. Besides, we none of us have room to boast, 'let him that thinketh he standeth,' and so on, you know what I mean."

"Yes," said Mr. Dunwell, "I quite understand."

Walter Bardsley sat the while strangely indignant that what seemed to him so weighty a matter should be treated so lightly, and had it been any other than Norwood Hayes, he would have taken up the cudgels there and then. Even as it was, he could not but remark hurriedly, and somewhat shame-facedly, "It seems to me that our duty to our neighbour is to help him to use self-control, and not to put it to the strain."



Norwood Hayes, however, was not to be tempted to take up the gauntlet.

"That's it, that's it, exactly," said he, "set a good example of strength and self-command, and don't be everlastingly pressing a man. It is foolish at the best, and with weak-minded men it is absolutely criminal. I declare, I get quite vexed with people. 'Now do take a little more, Mr. A.' 'Let me fill up your glass, Mr. B.' 'You've had such a little drop, Mr. C.'" And Mr. Hayes could not have been more emphatic if he had been Father Mathew, Neal Dow, and J. B. Gough rolled into one. "However," he continued, with a sigh of relief, "let's change the subject. Have another cigar, Dunwell? What'll you have to drink with it? Try a glass of sherry?"

"No, thank you, I don't think it's a good plan to change your liquor."

"Oh! all right! No compulsion at my house. 'There's the whiskey by you, help yourself.'" And the worthy pastor did as he was told.

Walter Bardsley looked on, and his brow contracted as though he thought the minister was doing wrong. The wonder is that he did not frown at Norwood Hayes, but then, it must be remembered that Mr. Norwood Hayes was the subject of Walter Bardsley's hero-worship, and he regarded him as a veritable Bayard, a "knight without fear and without reproach."

"By the way, what's this I hear about Huddleston the Great?" said Mr. Dunwell, sipping from his glass, and sending the curling smoke aloft by way of introduction to the new theme.

And the bruised and battered body of their comrade in many a "social" lay stark and cold in its grave beneath the elm-tree; while on the sofa in her shadowed chamber lies the form of Jennie Bardsley. Her white face is turned to the wall, as she sighs and whispers the

name of Reuben, and finds no tears to ease her aching heart.

No wonder that Walter Bardsley, despite his reverence for the father of his Alice, was glad to ask permission to retire.

As he walked homeward through the quiet streets, he overtook old Aaron Brigham.

"Hallo! Aaron," said he "it's not usual to see you parading the streets of Netherborough at this time of night."

"No," said the old man, "I don't much matter it noo that m' poor old eyes fail me, ah've been ti' see Tom Smart."

"What's the matter with him?" said Walter. "Is he ill?"

"Ill! Aye, marry! John Barleycorn's broken his head for him, and mauled him considerably, and his bairns are half-starved, thanks to'd tonning o' t' fost sod."

"Aye me! I'm sorry to hear that, Aaron. I thought he was keeping straight too, now, but the turning of that first sod will have more to answer for than poor Tom Smart."

"Well, mebbe t' tonning o' t' sod wasn't so mich t' blame as t' tonning o' the beer-barrel taps and them as does it; may God forgive 'em."

"Right you are, Aaron, I much doubt that had it not been for that unlucky business, poor Reuben Stanford would have been a living man this day. And there at Mr. Hayes they have just been saying that he was 'nobody's enemy but his own.'"

"What!" said Aaron, "and what sort of a friend then has he been to Jennie Bardsley, God bless her?"

"Not much of a one for a certainty. One thing is certain, Aaron, we must do our best to beat the drink, or it will half empty Netherborough."

"Ah say, Mr. Walter, give us yer hand."

He laid it in the hard rough palm of the old man.

Aaron took off his hat, and standing with his white head uncovered, he said :

"There's nobbut a few of us in Netherborough to fight the drink devil, Walter Bardsley, will you stand fast?"

"Aye, that I will."

"God bless thee, m' lad, and trust to Him, and *not to Norwood Hayes.*"

## CHAPTER XII.

AARON'S words concerning the mischief that had befallen Tommy Smart were by no means metaphorical. There is a well-known saying to the effect that a special Providence takes charge of children and drunkards. As regards the children, I believe it with all my heart, but as to the drunkards—well, there is a Providence, and a special one for that matter, that looks after all men—we should be in parlous straits were it not so, but for all that the saying is to all intents and purposes an unadulterated lie, coined by the same hand that says, "It will do you good," and for the selfsame purpose. I suppose it is intended to give courage to those who, having drunk more than their heads can stand, are persuaded to take "just another," because it will be all right anyhow. The only providence there is in the whole business is contained in the liquor itself, a sort of anæsthetic which for the time being deadens a man's consciousness of pain, and hides from him the loss of his manhood, but both the sense of pain and the sense of loss come back with redoubled force as the aching brain yields once more to the sway of reason.

This lying providence, born of the devil, had done but badly by Tommy Smart, and for many weeks after the pandemonium on Netherborough Green, he was confined a close prisoner in his own home, if so high a title can be rightly given to the squalid and miserable quarters in which he lay. Tommy was a man of very extravagant tastes in one direction—that of the "Red Cow," and as this indulgence cost him the greater part of what he earned, and

at the same time altogether precluded the possibility of his getting more, it can hardly be expected that his dwelling should be other than it was, beggarly and bare, a type and pattern of the holes and hovels in which the worshippers of the drink-god live—and die.

There was no furniture in it, for the ghosts of broken chairs, the scraggy remnant of a table, the heaps of rags and shavings that passed for beds, and some few relics of the time when his roof-tree knew a mistress, and his bairns a mother, can certainly not be dignified with the name. His little house, one of a terrace standing back from the main street in a yard, was well enough, and one or two of the neighbours, who took a bit of pride in their homes, managed to make bonnie pictures of their domains, though they were poor enough, good faith; and there was even a bit of garden ground attached to each tenancy, just down by the beck side; but Tommy Smart's garden was a fair counterpart of Tommy Smart's home, and in it, as in the garden of Watt's sluggard, one might have seen the thorns and the thistles grow broader and higher.

All this was a natural consequence of Tommy Smart's extravagance, for he was obliged to pinch himself in the matter of expenditure in all other things, that the flow of liquor might have but little stint. Nor would this have mattered so much if he alone had been affected by the operation. In that case he might have so far pinched himself as to have pinched himself out of existence, and he would have been neither mourned nor missed, nor would any living soul have been the worse for it. Sad and sorrowful a thing it is to say, but as absolutely true as it is sad and sorrowful.

There was a time, not so very long ago either, when Tom (not Tommy) Smart was, as his name suggests, as smart and likely a young fellow as could be found in all the Riding. Never a ploughman could turn a straighter furrow.

Never a waggoner could better handle a team of horses. Never a harvester could mow a wider or a cleaner swathe. In those days Tom was quite an object of competition among the farmers, every one of whom was ready to hire him at the highest wage.

At that time he was the only son of his mother, and she a widow, and everybody admired the diligent and loving way in which he did more than his duty to her, if that be possible, and filled her life with gladness and her eyes with smiles, until the reaper, whose name is Death, gathered her in the sweep of His sickle for the Harvest Home on high. Everybody, too, congratulated Ada Norris, housemaid at the farmhouse where he himself was employed, when, sometime later, he married her, and housed her in a cosy cottage, rented from his master; and they prophesied abounding happiness and prosperity to the young couple, and said they wouldn't wonder a bit if in a little while they had a farm of their own. Aye, and if they could have had an occasional peep into the ever-expanding stocking in which the young folk's savings were stored, the prophets might have made even bolder predictions still.

In a very short time his employer, Farmer Wilkinson, of Dulton Wold, made him his foreman, and was profuse in his promises to further his interests, for he genuinely respected both him and his young wife. Under Tom's able management the farm, always a good one, improved vastly. The foreman's eye became almost as good as the master's, and as a consequence there was no skulking or half-shod work. Then came a tremendous harvest. The seasons seemed to fall once again into their almanac order, and the broad acres of Dulton Wold were a golden glory. In securing this golden spoil, Tom's ability was manifest to all comers, and by his able management he succeeded in gathering every bushel of grain without confusion, waste of time or labour, without accident, and so smartly as just

to avoid the break-up of the weather that almost immediately followed. The stack-yard was never so full, the stacks were never so big and high, and Farmer Wilkinson resolved to hold a harvest supper on a scale proportionate to the splendour of his crops.

Farmer Wilkinson was, in his way, a religious man, and though he felt conscious that he had through his agents sown the grain and tended it, yet he also felt and acknowledged that God it was who had given the increase; and so, in deep gratitude to the open-handed Providence that had filled his barns and stored his granaries, he gave everybody who cared to come the opportunity of getting "gloriously drunk"—a privilege of which not a few availed themselves to the full. This was by no means an exceptional thing then-a-day—this was the Harvest Home of the Good Old Times, about which we hear such a lot of sentimental twaddle. By-the-way, this Harvest Home has not been vastly improved on in a good many places I could mention up to this day.

In their alcoholic frenzy the revellers remarked vociferously that they wouldn't go home till morning, till daylight did appear. A good few of them didn't go home even then: some because they couldn't, and others because they preferred to adjourn to some adjacent hostelry licensed to facilitate the transformation of the Queen's lieges into brutes or devils, imbeciles or fools.

Now, Farmer Wilkinson declared that it was largely owing to Tom's clever management and prompt activity that the harvest had been so large and so safely gathered in. So it naturally followed that Tom had to be made much of. His health had to be drunk "with a three times three." The most popular man of the evening, he had to drink with everybody, and everybody had to drink with him. Tom was ever a cheerful, genial, open-hearted soul, and so he surrendered himself to the spirit of the occasion, and might

have testified, as I have heard a workman boastingly testify more than once, "I never was drunk in my life."

In such style the night wore on until some time after midnight, when the thought of his sweet wife, Ada, sitting up for him alone, passed across his beer-befuddled brain. Drunk as he was, the still small voice of conscience was not altogether dead within him, and there can be no doubt that he really loved his wife. With the serious air of beery insanity he rose from among his "friends," staggered out into the night, and reeled homeward. Once or twice he fell, but managed to regain his feet, till at last, swerving as he trod a raised pathway, he fell headlong into the ditch by its side, and was content to rest there awhile in sweet repose, until he had pulled himself together a bit for another effort, taking in the situation as far as he was able, and cogitating in serious imbecility as to the next best thing to do.

Presently he again essayed his homeward journey. Crawling out of the ditch, he managed once more to find his feet, and finally succeeded in reaching home. As he fumbled for the latch the door was speedily opened, and, staggering in, he propped himself against the papered wall in the presence of his wife, wet, dirty, hatless, a semi-idiotic stare in the eyes that bleared from under his mud-filled hair, the only unclean thing in a place which all who saw it said was "quite a picture of home delight."

Was there any wonder that she was frightened of him? She started back at the unwelcome sight, putting her hands up as if to ward off some impending evil, and saying, hardly knowing what she said, "Keep off."

Then that cunning, cheerful, tricky devil, alcohol, saw a grand opportunity for a little "fun" (God save the mark!). Inspired by the grand idea, Tom would clasp her in his arms, and have a kiss of her. He smiled archly, bewitchingly, winsomely—so he thought; in truth it was the most repulsive ghastly leer.



Unsteadily he approached her, and the hand put forth to stop him overbalanced him, and he fell, only to spring up, in the sudden madness of alcoholic frenzy, and strike her, unmanned human as he was, on the face. She bounded, almost beside herself, to the open door, and out into the darkness, wandering the night through, and moaning to the moaning wind the overpowering agony of her soul, not daring to return to what was never more to be her happy home, lest a worse thing might befall her.

When the daylight broadened into day, she ventured timidly back again, and peered in through the still open door. There was a muddy imprint on the papered wall, and another where he had fallen on the clean-washed floor. He himself was gone. For hours the unhappy woman sat silent and tearless, the children playing undisturbed upstairs in bed, until at last kind-hearted Farmer Wilkinson came himself to tell her that Tom was asleep in the barn, and that he was "alright, only a bit dozy. He took a drop too much, you know." Aye it was a drop too much, a drop from manhood to a lower level than the beasts.

Ada Smart stood up before him, with a hard expression in her red tearless eyes.

"All right! John Wilkinson," said she with unutterable scorn. "IT'S ALL WRONG! You and your harvest supper. You've ruined my man, body and soul."

This is not fiction, it is sober fact.

The stricken woman's grief found relief in tears at this, and Farmer Wilkinson thought it better to retire.

I do not wish to be unduly severe on Farmer Wilkinson. He was neither worse nor better than his fellows. His father and his grandfather, and their's before them, had celebrated the inflow of the "good gifts of God" by the outflow of that other "good gift of God," the devil's counterfeit, time out of mind. Why should he be better than his forefathers? I don't suppose the question of the

right and wrong of it ever entered his head. Besides, his neighbours all did it, and the men expected it; and supposing that he, conscience-impelled, had provided coffee or tea instead of beer, what would the world, his little world, have said of him. They would undoubtedly have rated him as a niggardly money-grubber, hardest taunt of all for an English yeoman to upbear, and likely enough, sooner or later, the night would have been made brilliant by the incendiary fires of his blazing stackyard. In his way he was a worthy man, well respected, vicar's churchwarden, and I know not what beside, and yet to his credit, be it said, those words, "you have ruined my man," took much of the sunshine out of the morning sky; and as he passed among the golden piles that filled his stackyard, he had some fleeting thoughts as to their value when compared with that of an immortal soul. He put them aside, however, for he had seen many another in as bad a plight as Tom Smart, even if he had not been somewhere near it himself, and had no doubt that he would come round, and be little, if aught, the worse for it.

The farmer's thoughts, were, however, badly at fault, for from that day Tom Smart went down, down, down, till he reached the state in which we find him; and was referred to by one and all, half-pityingly, half-sneeringly, as from a conscious sense of superiority, as "Tommy Smart," no longer honest Yorkshire Tom.

I can fancy some of my readers saying surely he could not have sunk right down to the depths from that one fall, and yet if you had thought on these things and studied them as I have, you would have found that almost invariably in a drunkard's life the sad result may be traced away back to one prominent first step. It may be a single glass of wine, or it may be the first carousal. The French have a proverb which tells us that it is the first step that costs, and this is just as true of the starting on a downward course as

on an upward. If the first stroke be half the battle, just as surely is a man shamed but once; the second step is easy, and so it was with poor Tom Smart. Once he had lost his manhood, he never seemed to hold up his head again. No longer was he an example to the men beneath him; no longer could he reprove in them that of which he had been guilty himself, and besides, had he not struck his wife? Shame and remorse drove him to "the dog (say rather serpent) that bit him," and made him more and more a slave. No longer could his master depend upon him, and soon he had to seek another place; and then there was no competition for his services, and in his mortification he still took refuge in the drink.

Pluckily his wife stood by him, in spite of the hateful sympathies of gossiping neighbours, and strove to make a man of him again. But it was of no avail. It seemed as though he either would not, or could not, make an effort to check himself. Constantly they moved, and constantly did she try to nerve him to find a fresh place, and make another stand. It was but useless. His appetite for drink became a passion—the over-ruling passion of his life—and she, unequal to the single-handed war with circumstance and her husband's evil spirit, lost heart at length, and sank, first to the level of a drunkard's wife, and then into the not unwelcome grave, leaving four poor starving bairnies to face the stern, hard world alone. I say alone advisedly, for the father as a guardian and defender was worse than none.

Such is the "ower true" story of Tommy Smart up to the time when his high enjoyment of the banquet on the Netherborough Green culminated in a free fight, and left him the happy possessor of scars and bruises innumerable, and a broken head.

### CHAPTER XIII.

“**A**ND not to Norwood Hayes.” The words which had fallen from the lips of Aaron Brigham when he and Walter Bardsley had parted for the night had an unpleasant effect on the mind of the young man. He was half inclined to fling a sharp sentence after the old patriarch, who had turned off in the direction of his own cottage as soon as the words were spoken. He remembered, however, that Aaron was an old man, and that it was not exactly his place to rebuke grey hairs, especially when they are found in the way of righteousness, as they certainly were in Aaron’s case. He felt a little hot, however, on the subject, and if he did not feel at liberty to speak out to his aged friend, he could speak out to himself, and he did.

“He has no right to talk about Mr. Hayes in that fashion,” said Walter. “There are few men who merit such a slur of suspicion and distrust less than he. There isn’t a man in Netherborough less likely to do me or anybody else any harm. He’s too good for that; his principles and character are on far too high a plane. He is so strong and manly, so calmly capable and self-contained, and so royal in his self-control, that he may well form an example for all the young fellows in the town to follow; and to warn them of him is to do them damage, and him rank injustice into the bargain. No, no, Aaron Brigham; you are allowing prejudice to run away with your better judgment and your sense of fairplay.”

Then he fell into silent cogitation. His thoughts reverted to the scene he had just left. Parson Dunwell

helping himself to a second tumbler of whiskey; Mr. Norwood Hayes leisurely sipping a glass of sherry as if he were patronising it—doing it, indeed, to oblige the sherry—so small was its influence over him, and half-a-dozen others following a similar course. He thought, too, of the gap in the social circle, and of poor Reuben Stanford, drink-slain, lying in his long, long sleep under the churchyard elms, and of his own sweet sister battling with her heart-break in the home on which the darkness as of death had fallen. Then, in spite of himself, he felt his hair creep and his blood curdle as he remembered how the pastor had coolly turned from talking of the murdered man who had been huddled away into a premature and dishonoured grave, to gossip about the Railway King, and to drink the liquor that had killed their common friend!

Walter Bardsley sighed deeply. He could not make things fit.

"Mr. Hayes isn't an abstainer," he said, heaving another sigh, "I wish he was. But, there, I don't know. *He* doesn't need it for his own safety; and, as he says, an example of splendid self-control must have an educational influence on other people. Then, the man's got such a kind heart and such an open hand, he would do anything for anybody. I'm sure if he thought his becoming a total abstainer would do more good to others, he would join our feeble ranks at once, what ever people might say."

This latter thought gave Walter a little more content; and yet as he kept in his mind's eye the honoured form of his "guide, philosopher, and friend," he sighed again, and whispered with intense feeling and emphasis, "I do wish he was one with all my heart."

I have good reason to believe that these pages will fall into the hands of many a thousand reader who is as good and true and self-controlled as Norwood Hayes, and possibly as much in love with the doctrine of setting an

example of moderation and self-mastery. May I say to each, with all the energy that deep conviction can inspire me with, "I wish he were one with all my heart."

Still, again, the thoughts of Walter Bardsley clustered round Mr. Hayes. He thought of Mrs. Hayes and her secret weakness for "strong waters," and wondered whether her husband's absolute abstinence from the entire range of devil-drugs would not help his weak-willed partner in life to regain the womanhood that was fast going from her, and free her from the habit which would surely be her death and ruin at no distant date. Walter thought that the strong man ought to try it, at any rate. By this he had reached home, and as he put his hand upon the door latch, he sighed again, and said, "Yes, I wish he was an abstainer. My word! What a power for good that man could be!"

He was so impressed with this undoubted truth, and so full of honest and honourable zeal for the cause of total abstinence, that he actually had the idea of laying siege to Mr. Hayes himself, and his young, strong, energetic first love for what he rightly regarded as the cause of Christ and man, made his heart beat high with courage and with hope. Alas, he had then no just measure of the influence in church and social life wielded by the excellent men, of whom Mr. Norwood Hayes was a favourable type.

As was usual with him in those days, Walter softly opened the door of his sister's room as he passed upward to his own. His love for her was very great, and his anxiety intensely deep. She was awake; had not yet, indeed, retired to rest. She beckoned her brother to her side. Poor Jennie! Her pallid face and hollow eyes, the feeble smile that came upon her white lips at the sight of Walter, and the listless languor of her mien, all conspired to tell how greatly she had suffered, how heavy was the blow that had befallen her, how icy cold was the leaden load that lay

around her heart. There are many, many forms of murder, but there are few that strike so hard, and so cruelly, and so many, many innocents with the same weapon that lays the victim low, as does the dagger of strong drink.

"Well, Jennie, my dear," said Walter cheerily, "you are looking just a wee bit better, I think. I do hope and believe that you will get out to see the golden corn, before the harvest lays it low."

"You speak as you hope, Walter dear, and not as you feel," replied Jennie, on whom a settled melancholy seemed to be fast falling. "I don't feel it; and I scarce know that I hope it. My life hasn't much of promise in it now. My harvest is reaped; and the crop—O Walter, Walter, what is to become of me?"

"Promise! Harvest!" replied Walter, tenderly, yet with unusual seriousness: "Jennie, darling, what *do* you mean? You must not speak as one of the foolish women. I have been thinking very much about you lately, and I'm going to talk to you in all the faithfulness of true and tender love. You are on the down track, dear sister, in more senses than one, and you must not only put on the brake, but you must ask for the motive power that can draw you onward and upward, further and higher than you ever reached before."

Jennie slowly shook her head, and sighed as only they can sigh who think they have buried their heart where the graves are.

"Nay, nay, Jennie," said Walter, shaking *his* head, and sighing in gentle banter and kindly persistency. "You are a Christian, and an enlightened one, and life by you, and such as you, is not to be held too cheaply. What promise did you refer to? Enjoyment? Pleasure? Quiet happiness? The best and noblest and most serviceful life in the world, Jennie, was His of whom it was said, '*He pleased not Himself.*' I think there is promise in your life of higher, better,

nobler, and more abounding service than you could ever have reached had you become Reuben Stanford's wife ; aye, let me say it, Jennie, even because of the dreadful stroke that has made that impossible.

"Dear sister, *you* have suffered a deadly blow at the hands of a fell-destroyer. What about reprisals? It is for you to aim a deadly blow at him ; or, at any rate, to rescue those you can reach from risking such heartaches as those that torture you in these dark days. That large class of girls of yours ; this drink cursed town of ours ; the growing lads and lasses in their teens ; King Alcohol rampant everywhere, and the children and young folks left unwarned, unfenced, undisciplined, to become the sport, the victims, and then the tools of the cruelest tyrant that ever ground the oppressed beneath his heel."

Here he paused. There was a few moments' silence. Thoughtful Jennie, who was the possessor of an enlightened conscience, said never a word. Walter rose, kissed his sister tenderly, saying, as he bade her good-night, "Jennie, dear sister, young Netherborough needs a heroine, and the call has come to you. What will you do with it?"

Scarcely had Walter closed the door, than he felt a little surprised at himself. He had not intended to say so much, and to speak so strongly. He felt that the message had been given to him, and that it would accomplish that whereunto it was sent.

Jennie Bardsley sat far into the night, thinking, thinking, thinking. Yes, she thought, the curse of Netherborough had indeed dealt her a deadly blow. Her Reuben was a splendid specimen of a man in physique, in intellect, in usefulness, in all that makes a man. And Reuben Stanford was hers, her own, her treasure, and all the town said,

"The knight is worthy, and the maiden sweet."

Strong drink, and nothing else or other, had stolen him



from her, robbed her of the first full-measured store of love he gave to her, robbed her of himself, and in so doing had plucked the sun from her sky, the summer from her year. Strong drink had brought her a soul-sickness amounting to an agony, prompting for ever the one pathetic moan of hopeless pain, "Let me die!"

This destroying angel from the deeps had spread a thick, black shadow over two homes at least,—that one where Mrs. Stanford, Reuben's mother, sat in her widow's crape and cap, moaning over her son, whose sad end had all but brought her grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. "O my boy, my boy!" came from her lips in weary monotony, long, long after the churchyard elms flung their shadows on his grave. And on that other home where she, Jennie Bardsley, was the treasure of the household, and where the light of the hearth was chilling out, because the light of her eyes were dulling, dimming, she had thought, into death.

Yes, she sat far into the night, thinking, thinking, thinking. She called to mind the records and the ravages of this destroying angel in Netherborough, in her father's family, her mother's, and this latter thought brought the blush to her cheek, and the tears to her eye. Following in her mind's eye the various streets of the town by house-row, she gasped for breath as she noted the onslaught of this insidious and compassionless foe. There were the Richells, the Marvells, the Pollages, the Radleys. Oh, dear! It seemed to her that as in Egypt, in the day of its most grievous plague, there was not a house in Netherborough where there was not, or had not been, one dead, done to death, too, in shameful and terrible fashion, by this demon of drink.

Such was the tenor of Jennie Bardsley's thoughts concerning Netherborough. Alas, the curse of Netherborough is the curse of every borough, every town, and nearly every village in this Christian land of ours; and yet the Christian

churches, as churches, can let the infernal shame go on, and sing the Te deum, Benediction, and Doxology, without any discords in the ear and with no choking in the throat!

"What can *I* do?" said Jennie Bardsley to herself. I don't think she got an answer to her question then; but she got something better as she sank upon her knees and asked of God. She "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" And she said, "Here am I, send me."

That night Jennie Bardsley did not lie awake, as she had so often done, thinking sadly of the beloved sleeper beneath the elms. She slept well and soundly, as those may do who have suddenly come to find that "life is worth living," because there is honest work to do, and wages to be had that are gloriously worth the winning; wages infinitely better than any that can be paid in minted gold.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning Walter was amazed at the change wrought in Jennie's appearance. She congratulated him on the value of his prescription, and smilingly suggested that a dose of his own medicine might do him good. Not gradually, but even rapidly, did she recover her health and strength; and her spirits though, naturally enough, still subdued, gained a certain cheerfulness which surprised and pleased her friends. It was soon a matter of town talk. "How much better Miss Bardsley looks," was the common exclamation. Some were generously delighted; some said they were, which, in this miserable fraud we call a civilized country, is thought to be much the same thing.

Some genial souls, with that fine spirit and breadth of nobleness which marks the average human, hazarded the remark that the young lady "had got over her loss in fine fashion, and no doubt would soon be engaged again." This world is not good enough for exquisite creatures such as these, and in common justice to them we ought to ship them off this poor planet, and to send them in search of a home elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the welcome back to health and hope which Netherborough gave to its favourite, Jennie Bardsley, was very warm and very wide. She who had been a prisoner in her own chamber for so many weeks nursing her sorrow, was seen every day now in the streets and lanes, as if resolved on getting back the wealth of cheeriness and vigour which had been hers before her trouble came.

One of her favourite walks was the pleasant footpath along

the Spaldon Road, and, of course, she had to pass and re-pass the cosy cottage and pretty little garden where old Aaron Brigham lived, a very bower, in which the good old man could pass his days in peace. Old Aaron had been more than sixty years a gardener; head gardener for Squire Langley most of the time; and it was during that time of diligent labour and careful economy that he had been enabled to save up the little fortune which was a sufficiency in his old age. When he retired from Horton Hall, he bought this little cottage and garden, and called it "Lily Lodge." The lily was his favourite flower: but that was not the reason why he decided on such an unusual name. That was prompted by his unfailing and life-long belief and trust in the providence of God.

"The Lord tells me to consider the lilies, that neither spins, nor labours, an' yet they weear finer clooase then iver Solomon did; an' I reckon he was about as fine as any peacock that his ships browt him. Onyway, the Lord's cared for me, and I lives i' Lily Lodge to show that I lives i' the gracious Providence o' God."

Of course, Aaron's long career as a gardener, together with his child-like love for flowers, was sufficient to account for the remarkable attractions of Lily Lodge and its surroundings; but to such minds and hearts as Jennie Bardsley bore within her sweet youthhood, the main attractions of the place were the rarer sweeter flowers of goodness, simplicity, truth, sympathy, and godly wit and humour. These bloomed through all the seasons in the speech and life and character of the grand old puritan patriarch, who had been himself cultivated by the Great Husbandman for many a long and fruitful year.

So it was that Jennie Bardsley found herself at Aaron's cottage during these days of convalescent walks, very often, and found a hearty welcome every time. Esther Harland, kind heart, would get her a cup of tea, or a glass of milk, a

biscuit, or a morsel of cake, and that and the little rest she got made her walks along the Spaldon foot-path quite an enjoyment ; and the talks, the golden talks, she called them, that she had with Aaron were as great a refreshment to her heart and mind.

Not many days after the brief but potent talk which her brother Walter had had with her, she was slowly walking, for she was but weak, in front of Lily Lodge when she saw the old man busy in his garden, tying his tall hollyhocks to the stakes from which a brisk gale in the early morning had torn them away. The old man had not seen her out before, and would not have seen her now, perhaps, but that Esther, was in the garden hanging out the clothes, like the one in the nursery rhyme.

"Why, Aaron !" she said, "there's Miss Bardsley—Jennie Bardsley, going by. It's her ! It is, as sure as I'm a born woman !"

"Nonsense, Esther," said Aaron, with his usual dry humour. "If it's no surer then that, it can't be her ; can't possibly, don't yo' see."

"Yes, it can ; an' it is," answered the housekeeper, still following the unexpected vision with her eyes, and nodding her head by way of emphasis. "It is, I tell yo', as sure as I'm a born woman."

"All right, my lass ; but I tell you, that if it's no surer, it isn't true at all."

"Hoo can yo' be so obstropolous, Aaron," retorted Esther, who had rather a liking for long words, of which, however, she didn't generally understand the meaning, or properly manage the pronunciation.

"Why, noo," said Aaron, who was delighted at the news, and meant to waylay Jennie. "Did yo' ever hear of a born woman ? You were a born babby, Esther, my lass, an' you are, or owt to be, a grown woman noo, but I doot, mebbe, there's a good deal o' t' babby left yit, eh ?"

Hereupon, Esther, who had to be silent, by reason of the two clothes-pegs she held in her teeth, menaced him with the kitchen towel s'he was just about to fasten on the line, and Aaron hid behind a hollyhock to avoid the dangerous missile. Surely they said right in Netherborough, who affirmed that "Owd Aaron Brigham could be as boyish as ever he was." And why not, I should like to know? People who live under the sign of the Lily, as Aaron did, grow younger and not older, cheerier and not sadder, for they realise more and more, the idea of Child, Father, Home!

Aaron Brigham was on the watch for Jennie Bardsley's return from her walk. Esther was getting ready for their expected guest, that woman's specific for all ailments, a good cup of tea. In a little while the young lady was seated in the old-fashioned, spindled armchair, which had done good service for Aaron, and for his mother, for a century of years.

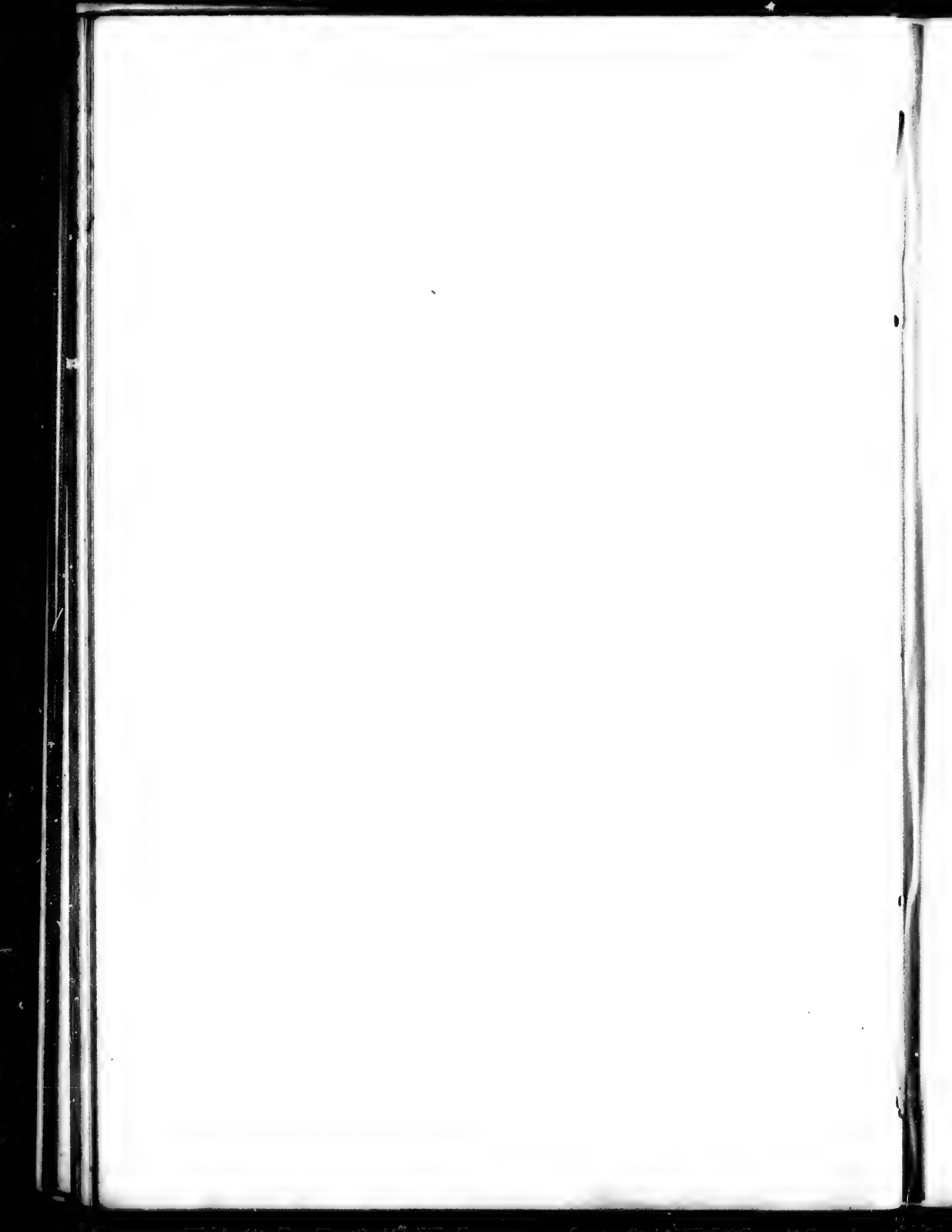
"Why, noo, this *is* grand," said Aaron, giving her a welcome that could not be surpassed in warmth, "I thowt the good Lord wad surely bring you oot o' the furnice in His own good tahme. An' noo the tahme's cum or cummin'. He allus said that He had summat special for you to do, an' though He can very well do without us, ivery sarvant of His is immortal till his work be done. Yours, I think, is only just beginnin'."

Jennie was much impressed by the old man's words, coming as they did so soon after the new consecration of herself to the special mission to which she had set her hand; and coming from such a quarter, they gave emphatic sanction to her purpose.

"Yes, Aaron," said Jennie, with a quiet smile, "I am beginning to think so myself. A few days ago, I really did think and feel that my work, if the poor, fitful, and indefinite doings of my life can be called 'work,' was over; and I confess that I was selfish and thoughtless enough to



"WHY, NOO, THIS IS GRAND," SAID AARON.—Page 104.





hope so. God has graciously shown me that I am not my own, and that His servants must not only not shirk their duty because of their own trouble, but find, in the trial itself, new fitness and new help for the better filling of their place, and the better doing of the task assigned them."

"Hey, but that's a good word, Miss Bardsley," said the old man, rubbing his hands in gladness. "It's the best news I've heeared for a month o' Sundays ; better even than your brother Walter's promise to stand fast an' fight the curse o' Netherborough. A woman, you see, can do so much mair, an' do it so much better, than a man. I reckon," he said, speaking in an undertone, "that you'll fight the same enemy."

"Yes, Aaron, and with the same weapons, the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and the sympathy of a heart, bleeding from the strokes of the same dreadful foe."

"Thenk God ! Thenk God ! Wi' that Sword an' that force to wield it, you'll be Deborah ower again. May the good Lord go wi' yo' all the tahme."

When Jennie Bardsley left the roof of the aged patriarch she felt much as if she had received, at the hands of one of the Lord's prophets, a sign from heaven.

## CHAPTER XV.

I HAVE said that Tom Smart's home was beggarly and bare. It had, however, one rare jewel in it, one dainty piece of furniture that gave a glamour to the place, and might well command the admiration of all who came to know its peculiar beauty. I refer to little Kitty Smart. She was the eldest of the children, and though only just seven years of age, was housekeeper to the establishment, and a loving little mother to the rest of the small family.

Kitty was pale-faced and thin, but healthy enough in constitution, and had she been well-nourished would have been strong and hearty enough. That, however, alas and alas, is a rare experience to a drunkard's child. Despite her poor, torn garments, and the general frowsiness of her appearance, Kitty was what the Yorkshire people call a bonny bairn, and a certain winsomeness of mien and manner won for her many a helpful plate of "morsels," and many a dearly welcome penny to "keep house with," for in that unchildlike fashion it was sure to be applied.

She had quite a wealth of curly brown hair on her well-formed little head, and the dark brown eyes that looked at you from beneath equally plentiful brows and lashes were eloquent of strength of purpose and of strength of love. The rest of her sweet little face was quite in keeping. Without being beautiful she was bonnie, and, on the whole, the latter is by far the best and most enduring in this work-a-day world. She would, I think, have been accounted well sized for her years. I am very well pleased at that, for "heroines" are all either "tall and stately," or "short and

piquant," and as I know I have got here one of the truest "heroines" that ever was, I am glad she has a stature of her own.

Now, there was one person in Netherborough in whose eyes little Kitty Smart was beautiful. He had fallen, as we say, head over ears in love with her, and never a village maiden had a more faithful swain than he. It is a well-known adage that pity is akin to love, and it was out of kindly Christian pity that Aaron Brigham first made acquaintance with the small housekeeper of Tommy Smart's establishment. He noticed with admiration and delight the way in which she cared for her two little sisters and the still "littler" brother, whom she called collectively "the chilther." He undertook to teach her to read, to help her in her household tasks, more especially to instruct her in the truths of Jesus and His love.

Kitty was an apt and willing scholar; she had a gentle spirit, and a loving heart, as well as a bonnie face; and so it came to pass that her aged friend became her lover, and as every true lover ought to have, he had the youthful maiden's dearest affection as his greatest reward. She was his "lahtle lassie," and he, by mutual agreement and consent was her "gran'feyther." There was no blood relationship between them, but the bond that bound them was no less strong and true for that. I know that there is a law to the effect that "a man may not marry his grandmother," and I suppose the same regulation of the rubric would be a bar to any "hymeneal" bonds in the present case, but, bless you, what has all that to do with such a delightful tie as that which united the hearts of "gran'feyther" and "lahtle lassie?" This was one of those "marriages that are made in heaven," and although the Book says that in heaven there is "neither marrying nor giving in marriage," a case like this is an exception to the rule, and in yonder heaven far above us, Aaron Brigham

and Kitty Smart, for they are both at home now, are still bound by the same tie, still lovers, true as steel.

Poor little Kitty had a hard time of it all the weary days and nights that her father was laid up with the manifold injuries he had received from Sir John Barleycorn's agents on Netherborough Greer. He was cross and peevish, and being deprived of beer, the only thing in the world he cared for, he was restless, ill-tempered, and bad to manage or control. At any rate, all this was true during the early part of his unwilling imprisonment at home. During the last few days, things changed wonderfully for the better.

I have said that beer was the only thing in the world that Tommy Smart cared for. On second thoughts, I am compelled to believe that in some small degree he did appreciate the brave little maiden who was a true mother to his children, and a long, long way the best friend he had in all the world. For some days before he was thoroughly up and about again, Kitty had noticed her father watching her with a kindly look, and his voice was marked by a kindlier and softer tone. The dear child began to have a flutter of hope about the heart that he would be more like a father than all the bad, sad, doleful days in which she had known the word as something to be afraid of.

"Ah think Ah can get oot a bit te-day, Kitty," said her father, who had, for some days past, been able to hobble about the floor a bit by the aid of a stout stick. "It's nice an' warm i' t' middle o' t' day. Ah think Ah can manage it."

"I think yo' can't," said the little housekeeper. She would have been dearly glad to get him out of the house for a while, but she was afraid that his sojourn in the open air would end in a visit to the "Blue Bell;" the "Red Cow," his favourite haunt, was too far away—the "Blue Bell" was dangerously near.

Poor Tommy looked so thoroughly disappointed, and

withal so mild and tractable, that Kitty was sorry for him, and tried to find a middle course. A bright idea dawned upon her.

"I'll tell yo' what we'll do, feyther, we'll ask Mrs. Consett to let yo' walk up an' down their garden. I wish gran'-feyther wad cum an' help yo'. I want to get t' weshin' done, and there's little Jacky's pinny te mend, an'——"

Tommy was smitten with a great pity for the poor bairn of many cares, to whom he had shown such scant affection.

"Hang it, lahtle wench," said he, in a fit of tenderness, looking at the child's pallid face, "let t' weshin' be, te tak' its luck, an' cum thoo oot wi' me a bit, that's a good lass."

Kitty stared in great amazement. To be asked to go out with "feyther," and to be pitied for having to work so hard; these were two things more astonishing than ever entered into the experience of Goody Twoshoes, or than Alice ever saw in Wonderland. She looked at him wistfully and sadly. He read her look aright, for he said, readily,

"Ah'll cum back wi' tha', Kitty; niver fear."

Kitty brightened up at once. The earthen bowl in which the "weshin'" lay unfinished was put aside into a corner. Polly, her next sister, who had scarcely seen six summers, was put in charge of the house, and in a little time the lame man and the valorous Kitty were slowly sauntering on their neighbour's garden in the warm light of the autumnal sun.

Mrs. Consett stood at her kitchen table gazing at her visitors through the window. She was a woman of a kind heart, but of very plain-spoken tongue, especially where ne'er-do-wells like Tommy Smart were concerned. She lifted her arm and shook her closed fist at the unconscious sinner, and apostrophised him strongly under her breath.

"You born rascal, an' weeastrel, an' idiot fool! You don't deserve te own sitch a little jewel of a blessin' as that

dear bairn. Ah reckon she's left her bit o' weshin' to give you a bit o' sunshine. It's precious little sunshine you've iver given her. Ah'll tell yo' what, you lumpin' lout, *your* sunshine hadn't owt te be a thim'leful mair than your weshin', an' ah reckon there isn't mony thim'lefuls o' that. As for Kitty, bless the bairn, she owt te dance i' sunshine as midges do i' summer."

Leaving her house by the front door, Mrs. Consett slipped into Smart's cottage, lifted the big bowl on to a crippled chair, and after a few well-used minutes, she had finished the wash, and hung it on the string suspended across the ceiling to dry.

Well done! thrice well done, Mrs Consett! We can forgive you your honest candour of speech in the presence of that bright bit of practical charity and neighbourly help. It is a good deal better than the smooth-tongued courtesy that lies with oily glibness, and has never a kindly deed to make the smell of it less intolerable. Well done, Mrs. Consett! So do the kindly poor kindly help the poor; and the wealthy charities of the poor do leave the charities of the wealthy long, long leagues behind. God bless you, Widow Consett! To you, and such as you, the Master saith, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

Tommy Smart had come out into the garden in a softened mood. The influence of the warm sunshine was as if it played on wax,—he melted more and more. His hand was laid upon Kitty's shoulder, but he made his stick his almost sole support; that, too, was a piece of thoughtfulness born of his softened mood.

"I wad like yo' te leean hard, feyther, I can scarcely feel yo'," said Kitty, and, as she spoke, she stood up all her inches so that he might not have to stoop so low.

Her "feyther" thought, in his better mood, how shamefully hard he had leaned on her; and how painfully

burdened she had been with cares she never ought to have borne. And so his little maiden felt, every now and then, her father press her shoulder with his fingers, as he might have pressed her hand. At length he spoke what was in his heart.

"Kitty, lass," said he.

"Yes, feyther," says Kitty, simply.

"Thoo hez a hard tahme on it."

"Yis, feyther, it is a bit bad to bide sumtahmes."

"Ah don't knoa hoo thoo manishes it."

"I gets help, daddv." It was a long time since that child-name had come from Kitty's lips.

"Nut fre' me thoo dizn't. Ah sud be a good deal better oot o thy road. Whea diz help tha'?"

A pair of dark brown eyes were lifted to meet his own eyes swimming in a mist of tears. A pair of sweet little lips quivered with emotion as they uttered softly, tremulously, one sweet word, "Jesus!"

There was silence for a brief space. Tom Smart was thinking. The operation was unfamiliar; its processes were slow; its drift, had he put it into words, was this: "There's no help for me."

In the silence, brave Kitty was thinking, too. She was used to the process. She used to say sometimes when her many cares were more than common, that she should think "her little head off." Poor little Atlas! All the weight of the world of home pressing on her small shoulders; and as Tom Smart's conscience told him, a great deal more besides.

Yes, ye ladies and gentlemen of England, you can drink of the exhilarating cup that cheers and also inebriates, with a light heart; but perchance the first would taste less sweet, and the latter feel less lightsome, if you thought how deadly bitter is the cup, and how awfully heavy is the heart of a drunkard's child. If you doubt it, go, I pray you, in quest

of one. I dare say you can find your quest within a stone's throw from your window, for their name is legion—a legion of the damned; doomed to a life-long hell by the solemn edict of a Christian legislature, abetted and supported by the Christian churches, who prate like parrots about the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the love of a gentle Christ!

Those large, dark pleading eyes are wide open now, and with a newly-kindled light in them, are lifted to her father's downcast face. The head of the little maiden nestles a little against his side:

"I say, daddie," said she, insinuatingly.

"What is it, Kitty?" replied her father, with quite unwonted tenderness in his tones.

"Do you want helpin'?"

"Nowt *can* help me: neeather nowt nor nobody."

The words were a passionate and despairing cry—a wail of hopeless regret.

"Yes, daddie, Jesus can."

"Mebbe He cud, but He weean't," said her father, as one who feels himself cast out and cast off.

"Hev' yo' axed Him? I does, every day."

"And what diz tha' say, Kitty?"

"I says, 'Oor Father, which art in heaven,' an' some-tahmes,

'Gentle Jesus, meek an' mild,  
Look upon a little child;'

an' sumtahmes I says just nowt, but I thinks aboot Him an' wants hard, an' gran'feyther says that Jesus hears that when his chilther——"

"Hey, Ah sudn't wanther but He diz, but Ah isn't His child. Ah's nowt but a great big sin——"

"Whisht, daddie, whisht!" said the poor little maiden. She would not hear him condemn himself to her,



"If you ain't a little child, He knows you're little Kitty's feyther, 'cos I've talked to Him about yo'."

"Thoo hez!" said Tom, in amaze; "why, wheea tell'd tha' te deea that?"

"Gran'feyther did," said Kitty: "and here he is!" As she spoke, every line of her face was lighted up with joy.

And why not? When true lovers meet, after even a brief absence, the happy flutter at the heart sends its glad signal to the eyes. Kitty had heard the well-known sound of her lover's feet on the garden walk, and stopped at once to salute him. The old man stepped forward to greet his "fair one" and to receive his reward in kind. Then he gave his arm to the weary invalid.

He looked the younger of the two, this hale old veteran of fourscore years, and lent real help to the reckless fool who had ruined his own physical manhood to satisfy a depraved taste. Aaron's observant and sympathetic eye soon detected that Tommy Smart was in a strangely softened and come-at-able mood of mind.

"Hey, Tommy!" said Aaron, heartily; "why, this is summat like! I'se glad to see yo' gettin' sum fresh air an' sunshine. You'll get on all the better for it."

"Get on," said Smart, in a voice filled with discontent and disgust about himself. "Ah don't think 't it's worth while, Aaron. It wad be all the better, booath for myself an' other foaks, if Ah cud manish to get off, an' let there be an' end o' me."

Strange to say, Aaron heard these hard words with evident delight. As he listened to such suicidal sort of talk, and read the influence of some soft south wind on the speaker's feelings, he felt half inclined to sing the Doxology there in the middle of the garden walk.

Little Kitty, relieved of her charge by Aaron's timely visit, had hastened home to finish her washing. She stood stock still in astonishment, and almost gasped for breath,

to find that her work had been done for her in her absence by some kind Samaritan. When her small lieutenant, Polly, had told the story of Mrs. Consett's visit, she naively said,

"Bless her ; she's a good 'un. I know who put her up to it."

Then speaking softly and slowly, she continued, "An' HE's a good un'! Gran'feyther's right.

'Jesus helps me, allus will,  
I will trust in Jesus still.'

Hereupon, Kitty entered again on her daily round, with a grateful and even a hopeful heart throbbing in her breast : hopeful, though so many things conspired to strike her with despair.

How many sweet and noble little Kittys are "weeping, O, my brothers!" And wearily bearing grievous loads of care and pain, and are crushed and slain outright, because the drink traffic is petted and pampered by an unchristian government in a so-called Christian land?

And the pulpit : O how shy the pulpit is on this subject ! How unwilling to meddle with this murderous monstrosity ! And the Church, the Christian Church, which should be the Greatheart of the children in presence of Giant Maul, Giant Grim, and Giant Despair, can clink glasses and exchange "healths" with the destroyer, although the hand of wholesale child-murder, is crimson on its brow ! O. shame ! shame ! shame ! When the Lord maketh inquisition for blood among those who are professedly of his own household, *can* there be any sign of the Sacrifice on their lintels to save them from the Angel of Justice and his avenging sword ?

Aaron Brigham was thankful to find that Tom Smart's adamantine indifference had been fractured at last, and that the arm that had dealt the blow was the Christ-endowed

arm of a little child—his own "lahle lassie," his beloved Kitty. Tom's passionate words of shame were music to him; and to his expression, "It wad be better if I could get off and let there be an end o' me," Aaron replied, as they sauntered round the garden,

"Nay, marry, nay. All you want, Tommy, is to get off the drink, an' get on to Jesus Christ, an' for you an' your bairns to go to heaven tegither. Hey, man, that Kitty o' thahne's a precious lahle—"

"Ah knoa! Ah knoa!" said Tommy, unable to stand any farther probing into a wound that was already very sore. "Look yo' here, Aaron Brigham," he continued, lifting his clenched hand, as if he would strike his own worthless self, "Ah'll eeather mend mysen, or end mysen, or Ah'll tak' mysen off a thoosand miles away."

"You mustn't do either one nor t' other," said Aaron, laying his hand kindly on Tom's arm. "You must get Jesus to mend yo'; an' you must be a co-worker with Him, by signin' t' pledge, an holdin' on to it, in His strength. Tom, owd friend, I beg an' pray o' yo', niver, niver, touch another drop!"

Quoth Tom Smart, as he paused a moment on the garden walk:

"Wi' the help o' God and Kitty, Ah niver will."

If ever man meant it when he said it, Tommy Smart meant it then. But the odds were desperately against him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THAT evening Mr. Norwood Hayes called in a friendly way, as his custom was, to spend an hour with Aaron Brigham at Lily Lodge. Both these men could talk, and talk well, and when they got together, each one knew and felt that he had a listener that was worth talking to.

They had not been in conversation very long before Old Aaron brought up the subject of Tom Smart. The fact is that just then the old man could hardly bring himself to think or talk about anything else but the poor, weak, but penitent sot, and the poor white flower that bloomed so wanly and yet winsomely in the thorny patch of his desolated home.

"I'se gotten a bit o' hope," said Aaron, "that Tommy Smart's goin' te tak' a toon an' mend."

"A forlorn hope that, I should think," said Mr. Hayes, who had repeatedly employed that luckless lover of the pot. The connection had been severed again and again by Tom's drinking bouts, and at last being tired of everlastingly "taking him on," only to be as eternally paying him off again, he had discharged him once for all.

"Varry likely," said Aaron, earnestly, "but you mustn't forget that 'forlorn hopes' hev been the meeans o' showin' more courage an' darin', an' o' makin' some o' the grandest captur's an' gainin' some o' the grandest victories that ever was gotten. I isn't going to sneak oot o' helpin' poor Tommy Smart because it's a forlorn hope. That's all the mair reason why one should mak' a mair desperate effort. I've nae doot that you'll all come in an' clap your hands if

I succeed, and say what a grand thing Christianity is to work sitch wonders! an' yet like t' Pharisees 'at Jesus flogged wi' a wire whip, you niver helped it wi' one o' your fingers. There's a deal o' varry cheap patronage o' Christianity common just noo. But I tell yo', Mr. Hayes, it is a good deal better to do well yourself, then to pat it on the back when it is done, and say, 'Well done!'

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Norwood Hayes, who took Aaron's hard hitting in very good part, as he always did. "I don't want to undervalue the hope and patience, the courage and effort that will have to be expended over so inveterate a case as Tommy Smart's; I was only expressing my very strong doubt as to whether such an expenditure will not be an absolute waste of time. I've done a great deal to help the fellow out of the ditch myself, but he lies there still, and will do so to the end of the chapter. That's my opinion."

"Yes," said Aaron, rather slowly, "you hev', as you say, done a good deal for Tommy Smart, booath in givin' him work, an' forgivin' his faults, an' plyin' him wi' good advice. God bless yo' for it, says I; but when you say 'a good deal' does that meean all yo' owt te ha' done? Does it mean all yo' could ha' done? Is you an' me to be t' judges as to whither oor 'good deal' is t' right deal? Tommy Smart needs a good deal to save him, for he's varry far gone. Noo you see your 'good deal' an' his 'good deal' differs a good deal i' their dimensions. They say when John Wesley was a little lad at home, his mother had a lot o' trubble to drive a sartain lesson into him. His feyther interferred, 'Susanna,' said he, 'why do yo' tell that lad that lesson twenty times ower?' 'Why,' she said, 'because nineteen times isn't enough.' Noo, Mr. Hayes, your 'good deal' 'at you've done for Tommy Smart, an' I don't blame you, hez stopped short at t' nineteent tahme. When t' woman i' t' gospel lost her bit o' silver *she* swept an' sowt '*until she*

*found it.' Tommy Smart's worth a good deal mair then a piece o' silver, Mr. Hayes."*

"Look here, old friend," said Mr. Hayes, with a courteous gesture and a laugh that had not much ring in it. "If you use your 'wire whip' with such unmerciful muscle, I shall have to run away. I do assure you that I will gladly help you to rescue poor Smart, and I hope he will be a little more set upon helping himself than he has been."

"I hope he will," said Aaron, fixing his expressive and undimmed grey eyes upon his companion; "but I say, my friend, don't you see that *that* is a 'forlorn hope' for him. What chance hez he? Hoo can he contend again the drink-trade patronised by law? His enemies are legion; hoo can he fight 'em. Ha' yo' iver ta'en t' truble te coont the number o' public hooses i' Netherboro'?"

"No," said Mr. Hayes, "I can't say I ever did. There are too many, I've no doubt."

"Then it's tahme yo' did, sir; an' seein' you're a fooremost man i' t' toon, it's tahme yo' tried to mak' 'em fewer. Now tick 'em off your ten fingers as I mention, one by one, all the 'publics' that are let lowse like lions on this small population of less than two thousand.

"Tom Smart lives i' Soo'gat', right at the town end. If he gets work again wi' Farmer Barrass, up i' Northgat' right at t'other end, he'll hev' to pass the oppen doors of a baker's dozen of drink shops licensed by the law of England to trip up Tommy Smart an' fling him on his back in the dike he's just gotten oot with his bare life. Let's see noo—

"There's t' 'Blue Bell' to begin wi', just opposite his aun hoose; Black Bell I call it, for it's tollin' every day the passin' bell for somebody. There's the 'Barleycorn.' My word! What crops an' harvest o' sin an' misery has sprung fre' that devil's grain o' corn. There's t' 'Red Lion,' at the corner, seekin' whcm he may devour. There's t' 'Sportman's Arms,'

where the devil is the sportsman, gin, rum, beer, and brandy, them's the dogs, and t' game is poor fools like Tommy Smart, that are sure to get hunted down. There's the 'Grapes,' that calls itself an inn, an' thinks itself a peg aboov' its brother pubs. But what's in a name? A drink-shop by any other, wad smell as foul, and do the devil's work as thoroughly. There's the 'Half Moon,' which is sign o' the half-lunatics that spend their time there. There's t' 'Cross Keys,' t' oppen t' gate o' poverty on one hand, an' the door of death on t'other. There's a little dram-shop called the 'White Swan,' which is the only thing white about it. There's the 'Griffin Inn.' Just the sign for a drink-shop, 'Griffin' is. It's all teeth and claws, with a sting for a tongue, and another in its tail. It's a picthur to the life o' the dragon Alcohol. Then there's the 'Star,'—Lucifer, I expect, that wad bring doon a third part of Netherbro' to ruin. Opposite the toon-pump, the one spot where you *can* get good liquor, there's the 'Bay Horse.' I knoa mair than one or two that it hez carried to the grave at a gallop. There's the 'Red Cow': that's poor Tommy Smart's favourite resort. He goes to get such milk as she can cheat 'im wi'; gets milked dry hisself. There's the 'Angel Inn,'—a fallen un, of course, and makin' others fall. There's the 'Dog and Duck.' That's the lan'lord an' tippler. Poor Duck! the dog generally finishes him, feathers an' all. Then there's the 'Black Swan': nae wonder it's black, seein' the sort o' river it swims on. Noo, Mr. Hayes, hoo monny ha' yo' ticked off?"

"Bless me!" said Mr. Norwood Hayes, in much surprise, "why, that is fifteen public houses!"

"Aye," said Aaron, his voice trembling with strong feeling, "a public house to every six score o' the population. An' men like Mr. Norwood Hayes are content to let the murderous rapine go on unhindered. 'Christian' Cains wear nae averted faces noo-a-days, because their brand is

not on their broo, as it was on t' fost o' that name, only on their conscience, an' 'what the eye can't see the heart doesn't grieve efter ;' but it will both see an' sorrow some day—some day, Mr. Hayes,—some day soon."

Mr. Norwood Hayes was silent. What was he to say? What *could* he say? Nothing! What more can you say,—you, the reader of these pages. For Aaron Brigham's public house statistics of Netherborough are not fiction, they are fact!

"Noo then," continued Aaron, after a brief pause, "Tom Smart will have to pass all these places twice ivery day! All with widely-open doors; most on 'em rank, even outside the door, wi' the smell o' drink; an' he wi' that awful cravin' on him all the tahme! The Christian magistrates o' Netherborough, and among them at least one Christian minister, have deliberately licensed these mischief-makin' haunts! They have given 'em leeave an' liberty, to catch, if they can, an' to fling back this poor victim into the hell of sin an' misery oot o' which the fingers of his own lahtle bairn hez fetched him. Do yo' hear me?" said the old man, his voice rising in the intensity of his feelings. "They are licensed to seize hold o' poor lahtle Kitty's fingers, an' untwine 'em wi' their own brutal claws, an' send her feyther to death an' ruin befoore her eyes! O God, for this mad England that such a thing can be!

"Noo, then, Mr. Hayes, if Tom Smart, who wants, poor soul, to maister his deadly enemy, if he fails to run this awful gauntlet, this desperate peril, an' dies a drunkard, who'll ha' murdered him? Mebbe, when yo' see the Reverend Abraham Clarkson, Justice of the Peace, you'll ask him if his office is worth the price o' blood!"

Alas, alas, not only at Netherborough is this thing true. These man-traps, soul-traps—these torture mills for women and little children are doing a roaring trade through all the land. In the year but lately closed, nearly 140,000,000



pounds have been spent in that which is not only Netherborough's but England's curse ! Yet the Churches of Jesus Christ still trust in moral suasion to defeat their Satanic mission, and in many, many cases, do not take much trouble to persuade !

Yes, poor Tommy Smart has a hard task before him ; a grim battle to fight ; a long, stern struggle to go through. The one great hope lies in this, that dear old Aaron Brigham has power with God, and never touches the evil thing himself ; and in this, that Jesus knows that Tom is *Kitty's* *seyther*, and *she's* talked to Him about him !

## CHAPTER XVII.

AT length Jennie Bardsley was able to resume her labours in the Sunday School. The jubilation among the girls of her class was subdued, for "teacher" bore the tokens of the struggle through which she had passed, but it was very genuine, for their love for her was great. On that first Sabbath morning of her return to her much-loved work, she accompanied her friend, Alice Hayes, to Zion Chapel, and sat with her in the Hayes' pew. The service was conducted as usual by the pastor, the Rev. Daniel Dunwell, all except the giving out of the hymns, and reading of the notices. These matters were left to the deacons, and mainly to Mr. Norwood Hayes. By the way, one can hardly call the giving out of notices as part of the service. They are a very prominent and unwelcome interposition, and could be spared both by the true worshippers and the Worshipped.

Mr. Dunwell was, as I have already said, a preacher of unusual ability, and wide popularity. He was a man of fair complexion; he had no facial feature that struck you definitely as noteworthy, and in this respect his face was an index to his mental constitution, for that, too, wanted definiteness; it had in it a little too much of the willow, a good deal too little of the oak. There was, however, a singular combination in his expression of intelligence, kindness, seriousness, and humour.

If you looked at his face when in repose you saw certain lines that puzzled you. What did they mean? If something serious was said, these lines gave him at once the look of a

man who does not think there is anything in the world worth smiling at ; and you said, "O, that is what the lines mean, is it." If something thoughtful or profound was uttered, those lines instantly lent a look of intellectual power to his face, and you felt that they were the index to an unusually strong mind ; but if something mirthful or jocose came to the front, those self-same lines gave an expression to his face that made you laugh to look at it, and set you all agog for the exquisite humour that was sure to follow. I knew this man, and wondered at him. A more remarkable combination of Nestor and Yorick I never saw.

Jennie Bardsley was greatly impressed by the sermon Mr. Dunwell preached that morning. She felt as if it must have been made and spoken purposely for her, and that it was, indeed, a part of the call that had come to her from God. God's calls to duty come to men and women in many ways. I myself would fain be his messenger if I may, and I will therefore report here something of what Mr. Dunwell had said.

"*And thou shalt be a blessing.*" That was the text that morning. "I hold," said the preacher, "that true religion has its centre and life in the previous words, '*I will bless thee,*' and that it has its circumference and activity in these words, '*Thou shalt be a blessing.*' Abraham received a blessing from God, so he became a blessing to men. Out of the first came the last. True religion is the death of selfishness, and Christianity only fully fulfils its mission when it destroys all aims and motives which are either indifferent to or opposed to the well-being of other people. The Christian is his brother's keeper, and the more Christly he is, the more he finds it a joy to fulfil that obligation.

"To the little band of men whom He had chosen out of the world, the Master said, 'Ye are the light of the world.' He had kindled among them the glow of a living flame, not

that they might pick their solitary way by the light of it—not that they might sit around it, and say, ‘Aha, I am warm,’ but that men might see it and feel its power. It is not enough to carry your light in a dark lantern, flash it out on a Sunday, or on some special occasion, then withdraw it as suddenly to leave blinking spectators rather more uncertain as to your moral whereabouts than they were before.

“I remember seeing,” he continued, “on a certain festive occasion, a thousand men marching through the streets of a great city, when the clock in the minster tower was chiming the midnight hour. Neither moon nor stars appeared, and the lamps along the streets were but as twinkling beads of light that made but small impression on the dark November air. But wherever that procession went, a clear, full, and at times even brilliant, light illumined the streets and houses, brought every carven statue into full relief, and was flashed back from every window and every gilded sign.

“Every face, too, in the streets shone bright, every form stood clear, and the dull, dark night, right up into the midnight gloom above, glowed as with the promise of the morning, and turned the darkness to the light of day! How was this? What wizard’s work had made so great a transformation scene? *Every man that marched in that procession carried a pitch-pine torch!* Each torch flashed its little measure of light upon the dark, and so conquered it!

“Now, it is given to every true Christian, not so much to carry a torch as to *be* a torch. He himself is to be set alight; he is to move through the world’s sad shadow-land, a peripatetic illumination, showing the beauty of goodness, and the tender love of Christ. It is not enough that you are not a curse; that you work no harm. The poisonous Upas tree and the barren fig tree shall both be cast into the fire. The captured rebel caught red-handed, and the sentinel asleep at his post, are alike doomed to die. You must *be* a blessing.

"And, O, the joy of it! In the Holy Land, says tradition, there lived a man called Eliab, whom God had blessed with much wealth. He was also cunning in the wisdom of the East. But all this could not bring peace to his heart, or satisfaction to his mind. He was often full of sorrow, and felt his life to be a burden that he would fain lay down. Then a man of God came to him, and showed him an herb possessed of wonderful healing virtues. But Eliab said, 'What is that to me? My body lacks not health. It is my soul that is diseased. It were better for me to die.' 'The herb will do thy heart good,' said the man of God. 'Take it, and go and heal seven sick men with it. *Then*, if thou wilt, thou mayest die.'

"Eliab listened to the voice of the man of God. He took the wondrous herb, and went forth and sought sin and misery in their hiding-places. He healed seven sick people. He rescued a man from a great peril. He prevented a young man from going forward on a harmful venture. He brought smiles to the face of a tearful child. He succoured the poor with his riches. Then the man of God came again to him and said, 'Here is the herb of death; now thou mayest die.' But Eliab said, 'God forbid! My souls longs no more for death; for now only have I discovered the joy of life.'"

Mr. Dunwell concluded his sermon by saying, "Every Christian has that herb of life, and every Christian may have that joy of life. In proportion as he is a blessing, he has a blessing; the approval of his conscience, the smile of his God, the love of his kind, and the delight in doing good. Like the sun his course shall be

'Right away down to the golden west  
Bountiful, beautiful, blessing and blest.'"

This wholesome and generous doctrine, and the preacher's happy way of putting it, made a great impression on Mr.

Dunwell's congregation ; and to Jennie Bardsley, especially, they came as an apt and timely revelation.

As she left the chapel in company with her friend and companion, Alice Hayes, Jennie could not forbear from expressing her strong appreciation of the morning's discourse.

"Wasn't it beautiful, Alice ? And oh, how true !" she said.

"What ? The sermon ?" replied her friend. "Yes, it was very good. I think I've heard Mr. Dunwell to greater advantage, though."

"O, I think it was just splendid," responded Jennie warmly, and then added slowly and seriously, "It was indeed a word in season to me."

From this little episode it will be seen how much the "advantage" of a sermon depends upon the hearer.

Many a "dry" discourse might have considerable unction imparted to it if the vessel that received it had not been itself so dry. The reception and subsequent development of the seed depends upon the condition of the soil on which it falls. Alice, it seems, had been swiftly rid of it. Perhaps "the birds" came and picked it up as it fell. Mr. Dunwell, you see, was scarcely to blame for that ; and I am strongly of opinion that if all the blame that is now showered upon the pulpit was righteously and judicially divided, the hearers would have to bend their backs to carry their share of it. But there, I am in the ranks of parsondom myself, and my evidence may be regarded as suspicious.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"GOOD morning, Miss Jennie," said Mr. Norwood Hayes, who had been too much engaged with his diaconal duties to greet her at an earlier moment, and now joined them on his homeward way, "We are all delighted to see you up and about again. The old chapel has never looked like itself in your absence. We all thank God for your return to health."

As usual, Mr. Hayes was hearty and genial; winsome in mien and manner. No wonder he was so greatly liked. Jennie warmly appreciated his good feeling.

"Have *you* had a good time this morning?" Jennie asked. "Alice doesn't seem to have been 'hit in the right place.'"

"Ha! ha! ha! Perhaps she wasn't there," said Mr. Hayes. "Alice has a peculiar faculty for disposing her 'seeming self' in a decorous attitude in her pew, and then making excursions with her natural self into the surrounding, or even into distant, countries. It's quite wonderful, I assure you, how often and how far she can come and go between the first prayer and the Benediction."

"All right, my honoured sir," quoth Miss Alice, in a tone of warning, lifting a threatening finger, "wait until I get you home. *You'll* get 'hit in the right place.' There's no doubt about that!"

Mr. Hayes evidently had a due regard to the possible consequences, for he deprecated the idea of punishment, and made timely surrender.

"Yes, Jennie, I had a good time," he said, returning to

the question which had been put to him, "and so, I suppose, had everybody, with the possible exception of Alice the absent. Such a life as the pastor sketched for us this morning *is* worth living. Whatever the carping critic may say to the contrary, I endorse every word he said, and have had my resolution confirmed and strengthened to *be* a blessing. I have just been reading the life of that great missionary pioneer and glorious evangelist, Adoniram Judson. The poor Karens, amongst whom he used to labour, called him by a sonorous word in their own language, which signified *Jesus Christ's man*. By that title he was recognised, alike among Christian converts and heathen idolaters, throughout all the tribe. Jesus Christ's man!—there's no title like it in all the world!"

This was followed by silence—the silence that is golden. Mr. Hayes spoke feelingly, and Jennie Bardsley felt its force.

It was a bright and lovely Sabbath morning. The soft and balmy breath of early autumn brought with it health and freshness, and Jennie Bardsley was easily persuaded to extend her walk to Alice's home on the Scanton Road. She knew that Walter was sure to be there to help her home again if she needed it. Mr. Dunwell had elected to saunter in the same direction with his two younger children, whose enjoyment of "a walk with papa" could hardly be expressed in words.

Of course, these also must cross Mr. Norwood Hayes' hospitable threshold. It would indeed be difficult to do otherwise, for there were few who could withstand that gentleman's kindly courtesies. Mrs. Hayes had "one of her headaches" that morning: that, at least, was Alice's way of accounting for her non-appearance. The truth was that she was laid upon what she called her "couch of weakness" in a small parlour off the drawing-room, in silent rebellion against prohibition principles, and trying to



pass the weary hours on a mental diet of "Erminia the Noble, and the Gipsy Eugene."

Alice, of course, had to act as hostess. Jennie Bardsley was content to take a biscuit and a glass of water; the wants of Mr. Dunwell's bonnie children were met by a slice or two of cake, or better still, a cheese-cake with currants in; and to restore Mr. Dunwell's exhausted energies, after his arduous morning labours, the resources of the sherry decanters were offered and accepted.

Of course, Miss Alice could not leave her papa neglected. His diaconal responsibilities were only second to those of the pastor himself.

"What will *you* take, papa?" said the waiting handmaid, not at all in a whisper, or even in "softened tones and voice subdued," though her mother, the victim of sumptuary laws, was quite within hearing, and might well have called out from her couch of weakness, "What's sauce for gander might well be sauce for goose."

"O, I don't mind, my dear," was Mr. Norwood Hayes' response to his daughter's question, spoken loftily and indifferently, as if to make clear to all observers his entire superiority to all things alcoholic. "I don't think I need anything."

This was perfectly true both of pastor and deacon, but it could not go unchallenged.

"O, no, that won't do," said Mr. Dunwell. "You must not leave me to sip my wine alone. Take a glass of sherry with me, at least for company."

For company! And these two sane men, Christian men men of stronger mental calibre than ordinary, couldn't see through the ghastly sham!

"O, well, so be it," said Mr. Hayes, reaching forth to take the gentle pick-me-up from his daughter's hand, much as he would have taken a visiting card when told that

a stranger asked to speak with him. He did it "for company."

Norwood Hayes! If some hand could lift for you the curtain that hides a distant and a dark to-morrow, would you still for the sake of courtesy and good fellowship do as the pastor does, for company?

In a little while an addition is made to the little group. Farmer Stipson, of Scanton Grange, was not only a good customer, but a recognised acquaintance, and according to Mr. Hayes, was "one of the best fellows going, and if he only had religion to give himself control, would be a splendid soul."

"Good morning," said the farmer, as he entered the room, making an inclusive bow to all and sundry, and proceeding at once to "business."

"I say, Hayes, I just want a word with you about that new threshing machine. I was riding by—I've got a young horse in training—and I thought this will save me a journey to-morrow. Will you take my offer?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Stipson," said Mr. Hayes, "I never transact business on a Sunday."

"Oh, nonsense," said Stipson, with a short laugh. "I'm not going to pay you money to-day, or ought o' that sort. Just a word 'll settle the thing, you know."

"It's the Lord's Day," said Mr. Hayes, seriously and reverentially. "And I honour the fourth commandment, as indeed I would seek to honour the whole ten, and I cannot speak to you on that subject. Business to-morrow, if you please, and as much of it as you please."

The farmer rose; he was a little nettled, evidently, and was willing to leave without further speech on the subject.

"I'll ride over to the Grange first thing in the morning," said Mr. Hayes, as a second thought. "You won't lose any time then."

"O, well," said Stipson, still a little sore, and speaking a

little gruffly, "that may do, but I can't understand your scruples——"

"Never mind it, now it's settled," said the deacon, naturally anxious to conciliate a very valuable client of his firm. "Here, have a glass of sherry before you go."

"No, thank you," said Stipson, speaking frankly and brusquely as was usual with him. "I've been overrunning the constable lately, and must pull up a bit."

"O, well," said Mr. Hayes, thinking of nothing at that moment but the desirability of putting the farmer into good feeling after his rebuff. Such a purchase as the one in hand meant large profits, and who can blame the shrewd man of business for trying to secure them? "A glass won't harm you. It will give an edge to your appetite for dinner." Then nodding towards Mr. Dunwell, pastor of Zion chapel, he added, "*You can't do better than follow a good example.*"

"Very well," said Stipson, resuming his seat, "anything to oblige," and tipping down the sherry at a gulp, he handed the empty glass to be refilled.

Anything to oblige! Even the risk of body and soul. A second glass he was content to sip more leisurely, and he became more conversational and at home.

"I'm glad," said he, turning to the pastor of Zion's, "that you aren't one of them namby-pamby teetotalers, Parson Dunwell. I can't abide 'em."

"No," said the pastor, not particularly happy to have the compliment from that quarter, and taking up his hat as he saw Stipson's glass again empty. "I prefer to let my moderation be known unto all men."

Mr. Dunwell emphasised the word "moderation" that he might hint a caution and a rebuke. He and his two children then retired. So did Jennie, saying to herself as she trod the garden-path, what the pastor had said in his sermon that morning.

"Every true Christian has that joy of life. In proportion as he is a blessing, he has a blessing. O, Mr. Dunwell!" here she sighed heavily, "how I wish you had refused that glass of sherry!"

Mr. Stipson, too, went forth from Mr. Norwood Hayes' most hospitable roof, mounted the young horse he was training, and turned his steps, not homeward as he first intended, but towards Netherborough—they kept splendid sherry at the "Griffin."

"You can't do better than follow a good example!" When a few more revolving suns bring the Sabbath day once more to Netherborough, what, I wonder, will Mr. Norwood Hayes and his estimable pastor think of that?

## CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Farmer Stipson arrived at the "Griffin," he found the private bar already occupied by some half-dozen *habitués*, who had come to obtain their usual Sunday morning dram, as the fitting finish to their Sunday morning stroll, and the equally fitting preparation for their Sunday dinner. After dinner, they will need a further dram as "a digestive." That, however, will be self-administered at their own home, and will superinduce the afternoon nap ; and that will help them to get through the irksome Sunday leisure, and bring more quickly round the evening hours. Then the gracious doors of the "Griffin" will open to them once again, and enable them, by the aid of pipe and glass, to wile away the closing hours of the slow and leaden Sabbath Day !

That is the way that a large portion of the good folks of Netherborough spent their Sundays fifty years ago ; and that is the way too many of them spend them now. Right through and around this "civilised" and "Christian" land, the public houses are a sort of licensed Sunday slaughter-houses for the killing of time, and, alas ! for much other kinds of killing too. Strange, is it not ? that these moral shambles are open, and kept open under the special patronage of a Christian Government, when other doors, with never a ghost of harm within, are closed, barred, and bolted by Government edict, in order to "protect the sanctity of the Lord's day ;" and stranger still, that the Church of the Lord of the Sabbath can sing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," with these open pest-houses thriving within the very shadow of His house !

Is the State, in this matter, most hypocrite or fool? Are the Churches? The Rev. William Arthur visited Rome in the dark days, when the bands of Papacy had not yet been broken. "Sir," said the driver of a public vehicle, in answer to a question, "God Almighty is tired of Rome!" Is not some such conclusion warranted concerning Christian churches that can, and will, abide the existence of the licensed drink-shops, and their open desecration of God's and the people's day?

"Good morning, Stipson. Why, we thought we'd lost you. You haven't been here for a month o' Sundays. What will you take?"

The speaker was Dick Bardsley, the brother of young Walter Bardsley, and the champion of champagne at the great Netherborough fête.

"Morning," said Stipson, in his usual gruff and rough-and-ready fashion—just now, perhaps, more gruff than ordinary. "No, I haven't. The fact is, I haven't any business to be here now."

Farmer Stipson was not in a good temper. He was vexed with himself. He inwardly cursed himself for a fool, and he had another silent curse to spare for Pastor Dunwell, and another for Mr. Norwood Hayes, the two men who had been the means of his coming there. He felt like taking vengeance on himself for breaking his resolve. He knew that he was now committed to another drinking bout, which, in all probability, would be longer and heavier, because of the longer interval since his last indulgence. Yet, even now, had there been a restraining hand, and a kindly, deterring voice to aid him, he might have made his escape.

O, if it might have been! There was a loving and faithful wife at home, who was even now watching for his return—standing at the farmyard gate, and looking along the sunny road with shaded eyes, and with anxious care upon her comely face. There were four happy children

near her, now riding on the swinging gate, now racing across the daisy-sprinkled paddock, now clustering round their mother, who still stands watching, watching with anxious face and shaded eyes.

"O, George, George, why don't you come?" she says. She might as well ask the stony sphynx, as propound her question to the viewless air. Mr. Norwood Hayes, the excellent deacon of Zion's Chapel, might possibly fling a little light upon his absence. Perhaps not, though. What had he to do with it?

O, if it might have been. But, no; every hand held forth a tempting glass, and every voice was raised to bid him stay.

"Nonsense, man," quoth Dr. Medway, who, having finished his morning round among his patients, found a change, after dispensing healing medicines to others, in mixing deleterious doses for himself.

"Sit you down. Here, waiter, bring us a pint of sherry. I'll pay the piper. Stipson, you're below par, my good fellow, and that's the medicine I prescribe for you."

"There, now! That's something like a prescription, that is. Doctor, I feel a little below par myself. Just pass the dose." The speaker this time was Lawyer Everett, Witty Everett, they called him. He was a local celebrity, famous as a pleader in county courts, and at quarter sessions; clever especially at "making the worse appear the better reason," capable, it is said, of proving black to be white, only a little more so. Such moral abortions are plentiful as blackberries, thanks to "the majesty of English law!"

As Everett spoke, he looked with mock langour, and real longing, at the decanter, which the doctor of the beetroot visage and strawberry nose held in his hand.

This piece of taproom humour was greeted with general laughter, in which Stipson joined. That was the little oil in which he slid down into acquiescence with his fate. He

drank the sherry, which Medway ostentatiously placed within his reach. O poor wife and mother, watching at the farmyard gate with anxious face and shaded eyes, cease your gazing, George will not come to-day!

The conversation in the bar-parlour soon turned on politics. This is a topic held in much favour by toppers in general, and by toper-makers—brewers, publicans, etc., in particular. This may help to account for the beery and blundering character of the legislation with which this long-suffering land has been afflicted. It is a thing to thank God for that the principles of temperance and sobriety are fast permeating the councils and the councillors of the nation, and that the vicious element, strong drink, as a factor in English politics is a rapidly diminishing quantity. There is, however, even now, a tremendous amount of mischief done by the way in which Beer is under the patronage of the Bible—as represented by the national churches of the land. That, too, thank God, is a weakening bond. When the unclean thing is clean got rid of, the morning stars will sing together, and the angels of God will shout for joy!

Now politics is a topic that has a good deal of tinder in it; and sherry, especially in its energetically doctored condition, is replete with latent combustive forces. In the clash and conflict of bar-room argument, the sparks fly thick and fast. The brimstone element is abundantly present when alcohol is to the fore, and the bar of the "Griffin" was soon ablaze with strife.

Lawyer Everett, as was natural, could take any side; and could defend that in which he did not believe quite as forcibly as that to which he had pledged his vote. You are not to understand from this that the worthy solicitor was bound in conscience to let his vote and his "principles" keep company. That would be expecting too much of his kind. In the bar-room of the "Griffin," that day, he took



it into his head to be a Liberal. Farmer Stipson, like most farmers of the old school, was a stubborn Conservative. He was a strong and active partisan, and a choleric one. He was soon roused into a condition of feeling, in which he lost his self-control. In this state he began to call for his own supplies of liquor; drinking without knowing it, and rapidly reducing himself to a condition of absolute incapability.

One by one his "friends," becoming aware of his state, took occasion to retire. The doctor had another patient to see. The lawyer had to be home to an early dinner; and in this way, "they all, with one consent, began to make excuse" for not staying to have responsible charge over the comrade whom they had helped so eagerly to befool. They say poverty makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows, and truly, strong drink makes its patrons acquainted with strange comrades, chums, and friends! "The trail of the serpent is over them all." And so it came to pass that before the bells of Netherborough called the burghers to afternoon service in the church, this wretched victim of "good fellowship,"—heaven save the mark!—was maundering to himself about Peel and Wellington, Cobden and the corn-laws, until he fell asleep, rolled helplessly over, and lay like a log upon the parlour floor.

Thus he lay until Marveil, the landlord, appeared upon the scene. He knew his customer of old, and had him carried, as he had done many a time before, into a musty, comfortless, private parlour, for the most part unused, and placing him in a big, old-fashioned, and comfortless settee, shut the door upon him, and left him to sleep off the effects of the extravagant measure of liquors he had imbibed.

So the Sabbath afternoon wore slowly on. The "Griffin," the "Netherborough Arms," and all the more reputable "publics" enjoyed a season of comparative quiet, until the evening hours should fill tap-room and bar with bibulous life

again. The bells chimed a strenuous and persistent invitation to the citizens to go to church. Very few responded to the call. They were saving themselves for the Bacchus-worship of the evening. The stir and hum of the Sunday Schools were heard within the chapel doors. Quiet folk were sauntering in their gardens, or sitting indoors, listlessly looking through the windows, or as listlessly turning over the pages of a book they did not care to read. Of course this was Sabbath-keeping, and Sabbath-breaking was such an awful crime! In the low "pot-houses," as they were locally called, the "Blue Bell," the "Barieycorn," and others of the same stamp, there was a little business doing, for the poacher, and the loafer, and the gaol-bird, and the beer-soaked fool who has his wages on him, at least all that is left of it after Saturday's debauch—all these, together with the poor, draggled, unwomaned women that consorted with them, must have some place to go to, and here they are, ay, and here they'll stay, reverend sirs, in spite of all the chimings of church bells, until you shut up the "devil's chapels," and fetch the worshippers of beer and bottle, by force of a kindly hand upon their shoulder, into holier fanes and a happier life.

This is Sunday at Netherborough; the Sabbath, the day of God! And yonder in the clammy parlour of the "Griffin," a lost man tosses and maunders, now foolishly, now wildly, and now with unshaped curses on his parched and blackened lips! And yonder at the Grange, a comely woman sits alone with eyes that are red with weeping, a face that is white with a mortal sickness, a heart that is wrung with an agony of fear.

To you, the Reverend Daniel Dunwell, and to you, Mr. Norwood Hayes, I commend the study of these two "forms and faces." To all the religious and decorous upholders of "moderate-drinking" I commend them also, and I hope of you, that the blood and tears of no more George Stipsons

and their broken-hearted wives shall stain the garments, which you *say* is the robe of righteousness, with which you are invested by the Christ of God !

When the shades of evening were gathered round, the miserable Stipson came to be partially himself again. For awhile he failed to realise where he was, or what had happened to him. Then the whole horrible business of that Sabbath morning came back to mind and memory like a lightning stroke. He felt a strange sensation, as of a blow upon the head, a fainting, sinking feeling, as if he were sliding down. An unspeakable despair gat hold upon him; a conviction that was strong as certainty that his last chance was gone: that he could never, never, never again even try to elude the grasp of the demon that had gripped his soul and life !

This lost man knew that if he had the drink there and then, wine, beer, rum, gin, brandy, anything with alcohol in it, he should seize it, gulp it, drain it, if even he should die with the bottle at his lips ! Frightened, horrified, aghast, he shouted, or rather, tried to shout, for the sound that came between his lips was a shapeless noise, weird and inhuman, more terrible than any syllabled cry that could leave the lips of man !

The awful clutch of paralysis had laid deadly hold upon him ! Perhaps, nay, surely, a visitation of mercy this, that rendered possible the saving of an immortal soul alive.

The noise he had made was heard without ; was heard across the street ; was heard by Landlord Marvel, busy at that moment "putting things to rights," preparatory to the brisk run of business which was sure to come when the chimes of the church bells made musical the Sabbath eve ! The landlord sent in haste for Dr. Medway, and that strong advocate in the port-wine theory was commendably quick to present his bloated visage upon the scene. Did some tricky spirit whisper in his ear, I wonder, as he looked

upon the distressful and distorted features of the stricken man. "That is the result of your 'prescription,' Doctor. Before you gave it him you said he was below par. Doctor Medway, what is his level now?"

"Good heavens!" cried the doctor, as he regarded the paralysed farmer, "It's all over with that man. Marvell," he continued in a low tone, "I would not answer for his living another day. You had better send for his wife."

He stepped forward to take the doomed man's hand: but Stipson would none of it. So excited did he become, and such a look of hate sat upon his face, that Medway, not unwillingly, perhaps, left the room. Even in him, conscience was not absolutely dead.

The news was soon spread abroad. Dick Bardsley told his sister, and Jennie Bardsley, bent on the fulfilment of her Divine commission "to be a blessing," was quickly at the sick man's side. At once she took the management of the case into her own hands: sent for Dr. Preston, a young practitioner, of a new and better school, had the patient removed to a quiet and darkened chamber, and then found time to ask the question,

"Dr. Preston, is he about to die?"

"He may rally a little; but he can't recover," was the reply; "it is only a question of days or even hours."

"His wife must be sent for," said Jennie. "Poor woman! What a message to send on the Lord's Day of rest and peace! Who will take it? Can I do any good here, Doctor?"

"Not any, Miss Bardsley, that Mrs. Marvell can't attend to." He had read her intention.

"Then I'll go myself," said Jennie, who thought, as she went on her sad errand, of the grave beneath the yew trees, where her own dead darling lay.

Mrs. Stipson had already settled in her own mind that her husband had broken his new-made vows. She sat, bowed

down with grief and fearsome apprehension, waiting, watching, with a sickness at the heart such, I think, as few can feel as can the drunkard's wife. It cannot be said that Jennie's news came upon her as a crushing surprise. She had lived for years on the edge and brink of such a possibility. Jennie told the sorrowful story as well and tenderly as such sad stories can be told; but she was touched to the quick at sight of the dull, dark, blank look that came upon the listener's face. She only said, "O George, George! My husband!" and inquired of Jennie if he was not already dead.

The stricken wife and mother twined herself dumbly round the ministering angel who had come to soothe and comfort her, and let her lead her how and where she would. Mrs. Stipson hastened to her husband's side. Her self-repression there was wonderful. Jennie Bardsley seemed to impart to her her own inner calm and her strength of soul.

When Jennie found that the evening service at Zion's Chapel must be over, she asked the sick man if he would like someone to pray with him. There was no doubt about the answer. He could not speak in words, but the expression of his eager eyes said yes. Naturally, she sent for the pastor of her own church, Mr Dunwell.

For a few moments, Stipson did not seem to recognise him. Then suddenly there came into his eyes a steady gaze and a kindling fire. He grew excited, and vainly strove to rise. With an evident concentration of forces, and a violence of effort that was pitiful to see, he managed to voice one word, though indistinctly. It was this: "Go!"

Was the Reverend Daniel Dunwell, I wonder, conscious of the reason why? Why was he dismissed, this minister of Christ, sharply dismissed by a man, a dying man, who longed for the prayer of the righteous that availeth much,

to help a poor sinner back to God? Yet Daniel Dunwell was a good man, tender and true!

That Sunday morning the pastor of Zion Chapel had been complimented by Stipson across the decanter, because he was not a "namby-pamby teetotaler." That Sunday evening the dying drunkard will not have this Christian minister to pray with him, because he had helped, all "for company" and "good fellowship," to push him down, down to the first and second death!

## CHAPTER XX.

**A**S a temporary relief from this sad and sorrowful and o'er true incident, let us turn away a little to where the shadows are not so dark, and where the atmosphere is not heavy with the airs of grief, nor charged with clouds of tears.

The construction of the York and Netherborough railway was being pushed bravely on, and some of the more sanguine prophets were strong in their opinion that before another twelve months were over, the iron horse would be coming along, like Joan's mare in the nursery tale, bringing its tail behind it.

Of course, the very process of cutting the line brought a good deal of business to Netherborough, and a temporary increase of population of navvies, and a still rougher class, such as always follows in the wake of the armies of labour, as of armies of a far less unworthy and a far more destructive kind. One of the contractors took up his abode in the town, and became quite a dignitary in the estimation of the townspeople, who had never been accustomed to that kind of thing. I really believe that he was regarded by these simple provincials as a sort of personification of the genius of the new railway, and his presence in the town made it, more than ever, first a Netherborough and after that a York concern.

Mr Allamore, the contractor, was a total abstainer, a rare thing among his class in those days. The drink interest did not reap much advantage from him, and he was not popular among the fraternity of the barrel and the still.

But all other interests were benefited, for he persuaded large numbers of the navvies to follow his example, and they and the tradesmen, too, found advantage in that.

"Take all your beer in the shape of beef, lads," I've heard him say, when the weekly pay-day came round. "If anybody asks you to 'stand treat,' the best thing you can do is to retreat and leave them to stand by themselves. Treat yourselves to a respectable Sunday suit. Treat your wives to a nice bonnet and gown. Treat your bairns to a bit of good shoe-leather, and a spell of good schooling. And treat everybody that tries to get you to fool away your hard-earned money in drink—treat them with plenty of cold shoulder, and give them your full permission to come your way no more."

Mr. Allamore and Walter Bardsley became close friends. A sort of mission-hall was run up at the contractor's cost and charge, and Walter found congenial employ in acting as a missionary among the work people. He became almost as popular with the men as Mr. Allamore himself, and in Temperance work especially he did work of the best and most enduring kind. Dear old Aaron Brigham, too, was always a welcome visitor at the little mission-hall, and his brief talks to the men, quaint and hearty, were, as the men themselves declared, as good "as apple-pie." Jennie Bardsley and her brother started a Sunday School, to which men, wives, and children were all invited. It was a queer business, but it has left its mark for good on lower Netherborough to this day.

"If I'd a dozen helpers at my back like Walter Bardsley and his sister," said Mr. Allamore one day to Mr. Norwood Hayes, "I think we could almost kick John Barleycorn out of Netherborough."

"But why should you?" asked that excellent gentleman. He was well pleased to hear such high encomiums on his son-in-law elect; but he could not approve of such high-



handed measures against "Sir John" as Mr. Allamore evidently had in view. "John Barleycorn is a jolly and agreeable fellow enough, if you only tell him how far he may go. If you let him take liberties with you, that's your look-out, not his," and Mr. Hayes smiled at his own pleasant way of putting it.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Allamore, drily. "Have you many acquaintances of that sort; fellows against whom you have to keep guard to keep them from making a fool of you, or even something worse? I should soon tell *them* how far they might go! I should say, 'Go to Jericho, and don't come back!'

"But in your case, Mr. Hayes," continued the contractor, "that is not the question. *You* can stop your 'friends,' Barleycorn, Juniper, Usquebaugh, Eau-de-Vie, and the rest of your questionable cronies, excuse me, when you see that they are not to be trusted. *You* can turn off the tap, and cork the bottle with a firm hand, and you can, if you like, thank God that you are not as other men. But what about those 'other men' who cannot, and with whom these potent agents work their ruinous will—what about them, Mr. Hayes?"

"Why, as to that," replied Mr. Hayes, with the calm assurance which so well became him, "I set them an example of self-control, and silently preach to them the possibility and the value of a manly mastery over all mere sensualities. I let my moderation be known unto all men; and if the 'other men' you talk about would do the same, Sir John Barleycorn, against whom you have such a sturdy grudge, would do them no harm."

"But," said Mr. Allamore, "you know well enough, Mr. Hayes, what poor weak stuff human nature is, so far as multitudes are concerned; what is to be done with the pitiful crowds who cannot do the same, because of natural weakness and the perpetual pressure of temptation? Are they to be left to their fate?"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Hayes. "Of course I know all about the weakness of human nature; know it, alas, not only by the teaching of the Bible and my own observation, but by my own experience, too. But the grace of God is free to all men. All may have it for the asking, and they who have it have enough to master any temptation whatsoever, drinking among the rest."

Mr. Allamore stood still, and fixed his gaze earnestly, nay, sternly, on the face of Mr. Hayes, who looked somewhat surprised.

"Look here, my friend," said the contractor, with much warmth, "I think that form of words is used by Christian people, as they elect to be called, a great deal too freely, and that it falls far too glibly from their tongues. Far be it from me to speak slightly or irreverently of the 'grace of God:' it is poor humanity's life and hope. I do not make profession of Christianity in the sense in which you feel free to do so, but I have profound faith in the 'grace of God' as the means of lifting our mean manhood up to a better and nobler life. But all the same, I think it is high time that we were hearing a good deal more about *the grace of man!*"

"That's true," said Mr. Norwood Hayes, who, as I have already said, was far too finely tuned to truth and right not to endorse the telling sentence, though it did discount his own position. "That's true," he said. "I'm with you there with all my heart, but it won't do as a substitute for grace divine."

"Nobody wants it to," said Mr. Allamore, who was often a little impatient under orthodox platitudes presented in conventional forms. "I'm content that God shall have the sole handling of His own grace, and am certain that He does not intend that it shall relieve me one iota from the right use of mine to my brother man. You remember the over true words of poor Burns, who fell a victim to the

want of man's grace and the superabundance of man's selfishness—

'Man's inhumanity to man,  
Makes countless thousands mourn.'

Well, according to my poor thinking, man's kind humanity to man would make countless thousands glad, and the grace of that humanity ought to go from you and me to them that need it, whether the 'grace of God' be there or no. I will not allow you to shirk your own responsibilities as a brother of men—none the less if they *are* weak brothers—by relegating them to the 'grace of God.' If every man were an isolated unit, then each would be utterly dependent on the—I will not use the sorely abused and hackneyed phrase any more;—and I'm bound to say it would be a mighty poor world: that's my opinion."

"In the main, I heartily agree with you, Mr. Allamore, and, *indeed*, you shall find me a willing helper in any plan for the moral and social elevation of your employees——"

"Nay, nay, don't let us leave the point in hand," said Mr. Allamore, with a conciliatory smile on his earnest face. "We are dealing just now with the matter of a Christian's personal responsibility in the matter of strong drink. It seems to me that God's plan is to help man, save man, lift man, gladden man *by* man: and if the kindly 'grace' of a man like you can stoop to do and to be what a weaker and a worse man ought to do and be, then your stoop shall be his staff, and he shall find your high level by reason of the moral 'lift' you let down to reach his low one. It is of little use standing on the hill-top and telling the lame man at the bottom to come up where you are. You must go down into the valley, Mr. Hayes, and help him up!"

Mr. Norwood Hayes was silenced, if not convinced. No doubt he could have found material for effective reply, for he was clever at debate and a master at "fence;" but he was good and true, and as he saw the contractor's

beneficent soul gleaming through his eyes, and his sympathetic enthusiasm of (and for) humanity vibrating in his voice, he had not the heart to do other than coincide.

That is the fashion the best people in the churches treat the temperance reformers with still. They "respect our motives" within certain limits; they believe we do a "great amount of good," and they would not for the world interfere to stop us, etc., etc., but as for themselves, why, they have the grace of God, and other people can have it for the asking, and—God save Bacchus!

Mr. Norwood Hayes was *not* convinced. The citadel of high morality, girt around with the defensive moat of social conventionalities, was not to be captured in that fashion. Long and patient siege was likely to be equally in vain. It will be captured, I think, some day, but if so, it will be stormed into surrender, and great will be the fall of it. As yet, however, Mr. Norwood Hayes is strong, and on this question has perfect confidence in the judgment and position of Norwood Hayes.

Still, that gentleman was provided with much food for thought, strong food, too, as he turned his steps homeward. That sentence of Mr. Allamore's, about the "grace of man," was not to be easily dismissed as a mere truism. He could truthfully say that he was not destitute of the attribute in question. There were few men in Netherborough who had a kindlier heart. His practical charities were numerous and unostentatious, and his labours in what the churches call "work for the Lord," was full of self-sacrifice and cheerful self-devotion.

But this particular development of the grace of man, this giving up even of his own religious excellencies, this dimming of his own light as a moral beacon—this was new to him, and he was not prepared to fall in with it.

"No, no," he said, at last, as he neared his home at Throstle's Nest, and heaving a deep sigh, which showed how

fixed and absorbed his thoughts had been. "No, no, friend Allamore, let a man *be* a man, and let him, by his manliness, show to everybody what a man can be. The Scriptural virtue is not Abstinence, it is Temperance. Nazarites are all very well, if they feel specially called upon to take the vows ; I'll not interfere with them. But, a whole nation of Nazarites ! That can hardly be conceived, and would most certainly be a state of things, not by any means to be desired."

## CHAPTER XXI.

HAVING arrived at this most pleasant and comfortable conclusion, he arrived also at his most pleasant and comfortable home. Most pleasant and comfortable: that was a just description of the Throstle's Nest, or would have been, but for one certainly not insignificant drawback—the “couch of weakness”—and its occupant, his “partner in life,” who was in no sense a partner, and who was down in the mire at the bottom of the hill, and he so high at the top!

Mr. Hayes found his handsome laddie, Cuthbert, retailing some pleasant story to his sister, Alice. That light-hearted maiden was so interested in the narration that she broke ever and anon into merry laughter as it proceeded; and even from Mrs. Hayes' thin lips came a few feeble ripples, which were a great advance on her usually languid smile.

No sooner did the lively Alice perceive the advent of her father, than she laid her hand on Cuthbert's knee. “O stop a little, Bertie,” said she, “here's papa! You must tell him. Please begin again.”

“Well, what's in the wind now?” said Mr. Hayes, giving Cuthbert help to retrace his steps as to the story telling.

“Nay, there's nothing in the wind that I know of,” said Bertie, “but there certainly has been something in the water. Those two queer old cronies, George Caffer and Phil Lambert, had a funny experience last night, and I happened to be there to see.”

“All right, let's have the story,” said his father, readily enough; and beginning at the beginning, which is the reasonable way, Cuthbert related the moonlight adventure of Messrs. Caffer and Lambert.

"I suppose," said Bertie, "that the two comrades had spent the evening at the 'Black Swan,' the old topers, as they have been in the habit of doing for many and many a day, and had taken too much drink on board, which is their bad old habit, too.

"When they left the 'Swan,' they were quite hilarious, and sang, loud enough for half the town to hear, 'We won't go home till morning, till daylight doth appear.' It was a splendid night. The moon was almost at the full, and only here and there floated a white cloud on the face of the bright, blue sky. They didn't feel like going home till morning, and resolved to take a walk instead. They took the field-path towards Godlington, and after long, arduous, and devious efforts, they reached the border of the mill-dam, which was full of water, flowing smoothly and brightly beneath the smiling moon.

"I had been to Godlington," continued Cuthbert, "to see a friend home"—here the narrator involuntarily blushed, and naughty, knowing Alice smiled—"and on my return I saw our two valiant boon-companions staggering, arm in arm, along the bank of the mill-stream, and maundering alcoholic nonsense of the most vacuous kind. Suddenly Phil Lambert stopped, leaned his arm heavily on that of his comrade, and pointing to the sheeny water, he said, speaking thickly—

"'I say, Geordie, my boy, let's walk on there. It's a nice an' smooth bit o' foot-road that, ain't it?'

"As he spoke, he turned with a drunken wobble towards the pool.

"'No-non-sense, man,' said Geordie, who always stammered when he was in his cups (and hiccups). 'Thoo mawn't walk there; it isn't seeafe.'

"Geordie himself was too far gone to explain further, but he did his best to pull Caffer in the opposite direction.

"'Seeafe? it's as seeafe as the Bank of England,' said

Lambert. 'An' hoo smooth an' clean it is! Come on wi' tha'!

"In vain Geordie resisted. Caffer was strong and rotund, a real heavy-weight, consisting mainly, however, of the sodden obesity built up by beer. Lambert was thin and short, and would have been dapper if drink had not made him a semi-animated scarecrow instead. Hence he was at the mercy of his comrade in a struggle of this kind. What could he do? A bright thought flashed across his brain.

"'Lo-lo-ok here, Phil!' said he, in well-feigned alarm, and speaking in mock-solemn tones. 'Ah tell tha' it's as mitch as thy life's worth to gan on that sacred caus'y. It's the Duke o' Debenham's private walk!'

"Now we all know that Phil's a radical; and Geordie's well-meant device to keep his friend on solid ground failed utterly.

"'Blow the Duke o' Debenham!' shouted the pot-valiant Phil. 'Ah'se as good a man as he is, ony day,' and gripping Caffer by the arms, he stepped recklessly on the forbidden path, dragging his comrade in with him. In a moment they were splashing and floundering knee deep in mud, and more than waist deep in water.

"My first impulse was to laugh loud and long; but I found the drunken simpletons were more helpless than children, and in their vague efforts to sprawl to the bank again they fell, face forward, into the pool. Constable Harley had been watching them as well as I, and he and I together fished them out at once. Had we not been at hand, I don't believe that either of them could have saved himself; and certainly neither could have saved his friend. Their queer baptism had a wonderingly sobering effect on them, however, for they silently linked arms together, and made tracks for home, dank and dripping like a couple of scarecrows after a three days' rain!"

The close of Cuthbert's "funny" story was greeted with



a quartette of laughter, Cuthbert himself joining heartily with the listeners three.

Yes, they laughed! The English people, it is said, take their pleasures sadly, but surely the people that can "find fun" in the mad unreason of a drunken man must have a wonderful talent for enjoyment. Yes, Mrs. Hayes laughed in her washed-out way, and declared that the picture was "too absurd," and yet she herself had, more than once or twice, been the occasion of kitchen stories that had set the servants' table in a roar.

Even Mr. Hayes laughed—laughed like a schoolboy—and yet he had a wonderful reverence for "manliness" and the "nobility of man." One would have thought it would have made him sick at heart to hear how his friend Barley-corn had sucked the manhood out of these idiotised humans, as the vampire sucks the life-blood of such as lie asleep! And Alice laughed, and Cuthbert laughed! Two sane men had been robbed of their reason; had become little better than brainless fools; had come to behave as poor creatures do in lunatic asylums; had all but choked their lives out; had all but thrust out their unshriven souls unwanted before the presence of their Maker—and the laughter was loud and long! Verily, we English *are* a wonderful people, and the "Christians" of that ilk—the most wonderful of all!

At length, Mr. Hayes grew serious enough to extract his "moral" from Cuthbert's well-told story. The smile upon his face was followed by an expression of strong disgust, mingled with a measure of contempt. Then he delivered himself thus—

"Cuthbert, my son, Mr. Allamore thinks that one ought to stoop to the level of a couple of drunken fools like these in the hope that we may raise them to our own! The way these teetotal cranks go on, insulting one's common sense, is wonderful,"

Of course, just then, young Cuthbert's face wore disgust and contempt in *his* expression, too. His father, Norwood Hayes, to come down to the Caffers, the Lamberts, the Smarts! Ridiculous!

O, Mr. Hayes! Surely you, too, are inclined to walk on an equally moonshiny and treacherous path; but don't, for God's sake, don't lead Cuthbert there! *He* is not such a walker on unstable elements as you





LAZY IDLERS AT CHURCH CORNERS.—Page 155.

## CHAPTER XXII.

**M**Y little heroine, Kitty Smart, had been having a comparatively good time of it lately. Her poor drink-sodden father had not only stayed away from the public-house, but he had spent his days at home when he had no work to do, giving willing help to the overburdened little housekeeper ; and had come home straight from his daily labour when he had happened to meet with a job.

This latter was not often the case. As a labourer, Tom Smart was at a discount. Everybody had lost confidence in him. He had worn out the patience of everybody who had at any time employed him, and it was only on occasions of sudden pressure that employment came to him at all.

Hitherto, this state of things had not troubled him much. He had been content to loaf around or to join the cluster of lazy idlers at Church corner, and when a few stray coppers came in his way, to adjourn to the "Red Cow." But now it was a great grief to him that he had no work to do.

He had woke up to the fact that his children were in rags, and were half-starved, and he was both ashamed and sad at heart. The influence which little Kitty had gotten over him during the days of his illness and convalescence led him to long for a spell of honest labour that she and "the chilther" might have, once again, a home that should be something like a home.

One day, after he had walked many a weary mile in quest of work, and had been repulsed wherever he had applied, Tommy Smart came home tired and worn, utterly dispirited and out of heart.

"Kitty, my lass," said he, as he sank into the broken chair, which was once a seat of comfort, and now scarce a seat at all, "it's all up wi' ma. Ah've lost my chance, an' t' work'us is the only spot fo' ma' to put me heead in. Naebody 'll ha' ma. Ah wadn't mind, if it wasn't fo' thoo an' t' bairns. Ah cud dee willin' aneef. I ha' nae right to live,—but to see thoo pinin' away."

Tom Smart could say no more. He cried outright, and his tears, unlike many maudlin torrents he had shed in his cups, were the tears of honest feeling and bitter remorse.

Tender-hearted Kitty could stand a good deal ; did daily stand up under a load that might well have crushed her ; but she could not stand her father's tears. She had just disposed the two younger members of her family flock to slumber in the little loft upstairs, and was busy mending a rent in little Tommy's torn garments, when her quick ear caught the sound of her father's sobs. Down went needle and thread, and patch and thimble, and in a moment, two little arms were clasped around his neck, a little rough head of curly hair was pillowed on his shoulder, and a sweet little voice was singing,

"Jesus helps us, allus will,  
We will trust in Jesus still."

"Daddy," she said, when her small song-message had been given, and had fallen with strange effect upon poor Smart's stormy mind, "Gran'feyther says that God 'll nivver let me want for bread, 'cause I asks Him an' trusts Him ivery day. An' I've been thinkin' that He'll nivver let you want bread neeather ; 'cos, don't you see, you shall allus hev t' biggest bit o' mahne ; an' *you're* axin' Him an' trustin' noo, aren't yo, Daddy ?"

"I is, Kitty. I is," said her father. "I isn't worth it, but—"

"Yis, you are," said Kitty, stopping that kind of heresy, with a kiss placed right upon the spot out of which it came, "'cos *I* is, an' I's only a lahtle 'un."



TWO LITTLE ARMS WERE CLASPED AROUND HIS NECK.  
—Page 156.





Kitty had hardly given utterance to this remarkable piece of logic when that young lady's "true love" appeared upon the scene. Aaron Brigham as a sweetheart was most attentive and assiduous. Every other day, at least, saw him hovering about the maiden's bower, and at some periods it seemed as though he must "pay his addresses" every day, and even oftener still than that.

I am not quite sure that good Esther Harland was not inclined to be a little jealous of the little fairy in the Sou'gate cottage. At any rate, the number and the constancy of her master's visits were the subject of many a strong remark.

"Seems to me," she said to him on one occasion, when Aaron had told her to provide him with a little basket of provisions, to take to "lahtle Kitty," "that you'd better tek up your lodgin's at lahtle Kitty's. You wear oot as mitch shoe-leather goin' an' comin' as would pay her for your booard an' lodgin'. But mebbe she wouldn't tek yo' in for fear she got ower mitch of a good thing."

"Tek me in, God bless 'er!" said the aged lover, "my lahtle lassie would share her last crust with her doting old man; but you see," he added with a twinkle, "Sir John Barleycorn has had lodgings there a good while, an' where he goes spongin' for bed an' board, there's precious little left for them 'at teks *him* in. I think Tommy Smart's inclined to kick the greedy impostor clean oot o' doors, an' if he does, me an' Kitty 'll dance a minuet across Netherborough Green! O, my little darling!" exclaimed the old man, rubbing his hands at the picture of Kitty made happy, "let me only live to see that day!"

' And they call my true love, Kitty ;  
And she's wise as well as witty ;  
And she's good as well as pretty ;  
And O the best of all is—  
My love loves me ! ' "

These lines from an old song the old lover positively sang aloud in the hearing of Esther Harland! So I think she must have felt that it was no use interfering with old Aaron and his Kitty; he was evidently very far gone indeed!

The old man's visit on the evening I have referred to, when Tom Smart's tears were being kissed away by his loyal and loving little daughter, was doubly welcome. They resolved themselves at once into a committee of three, on the grand question of finding work for "feyther." An hour passed, during which they had canvassed pretty well the possibilities of labour through all the country-side; but, alas! they could not find an open door for poor Tom Smart. That arrant impostor and cheat, John Barleycorn, is very popular, makes men strong to labour—so they say—but he has a sneaking habit of getting men thrown out of work, and keeping them in that condition, sans work, sans wage, sans bread, sans everything, even beer included!

"I hev it!" said old Aaron, at last, slapping his hand upon his knee triumphantly, "we'll try Mr. Allamore again, at the new railway."

"It's nut a bit o' use," said Tom, shaking his head dolefully. "Ah've been tiv 'im an' asked him ower an' ageean te tak' me on, but he says he weean't; an' when he says he weean't, he weean't: that's the soort o' chap Maister Allamore is."

"Yis, *you've* asked him," said Aaron, whose voice was full of hope, "but Kitty hezn't asked him, an' I'm goin' to pin my faith to Kitty, bless her, an' the kind Providence of God."

Smart still shook his head. What could a bairn like Kitty do? But if Aaron pinned his faith to Kitty, that trustful and loving little maiden pinned her faith to "gran'feyther."

"If gran'feyther'll go wi' ma," she said, "ah'll go an' ax 'm. He weean't hurt ma, will he?"

Kitty's voice, and the shade of anxiety on her bonnie face, betrayed a little fear.

"Hu't *thoo*?" said Aaron. "Mah poor bairn! Kitty, my sweetheart, thoo'll tek Allamore's heart by storm. We'll go an' see him te-morrow mornin'. And noo that that's settled, we'll kneel doon an' ask the Lord to go wiv us." It was a poor place for prayer—the drunkard's home generally is—and Tom Smart did not exactly know whether to sit, or kneel, or stand up; but there was a saint and an angel there, and when a poor sinner has such companions, the place of prayer is apt to be the gate of heaven.

## CHAPTER XXIII

**M**R. ALLAMORE, the contractor, having paid his early morning visit to "the works," which at that time described a series of heavy chalk cuttings through the wold hills, was just entering his house on the Lonsdale Road when he was accosted by a little girl. At first he thought it was a tiny old woman that stood before him, so prematurely had care and hardship set their marks upon her. She was accompanied by old Aaron Brigham, who left her to tell her own story, and wisely so, while he stood a little behind, ready to speak if he was appealed to.

"If yo' please, sir, will yo' let me speak to yo'?"

Kitty spoke with "bated breath," making a couple of low curtsies to the "great railway man," by far the greatest man that had ever risen on her small horizon.

Mr. Allamore rapidly concluded that he had to do with a little tramp, and was about to dismiss her with a word, when he found himself looking curiously into a pair of speaking eyes that held him, and would not let him go.

"Why, why. Yes, my small lassie," he said. "What is it you want to say to me?" While he spoke he felt that he should have to do it whatever the request might be, for the angel in that face could never be said Nay, least of all from Mr. Allamore, who had great reverence for "the least of these."

"If yo' please, sir, will yo' give feyther some work on t' new railway? He can't get nowt te do, an' I hev'n't any bred fo' t' chilther."

"Why, who is your feyther? What's your name?" asked Mr. Allamore, kindly. He was intensely touched with the

anxious pleading of those lustrous eyes, and that assumption of responsibility for the children's bread.

Poor Kitty drooped her head upon her breast as she gave her answer. She knew, alas! too well in what bad estimate the name was held. "Feyther's Tom Smart, sir."

Mr. Allamore shook his head; but before he could open his lips to speak accordingly, Kitty had laid her small fingers on his arm, had lifted her speaking face to his, and pleaded, in a voice that had in it an anxiety too deep for tears—

"Feyther's tryin' so hard to be better, sir. He hezn't been drinkin' for iver an' iver so long. Hez he, gran'feyther?"

"Hallo, Aaron, is that you? Why, you are not this little woman's grandfather, are you?"

"Nut be blood, I isn't; but I is by love an' by the Providence o' God. It's a comfort to the lahtle lassie to call me gran'feyther; an' she gets sitch a poor share o' comforts o' ony sort, that she may call me all t' relations in t' Prayer-book if it'll do her ony good. I might as well admit it noo, as well as efter, that she's my lahtle sweet-heart. God bless her. I love her dearly."

The glow and the smile that suddenly kindled in Kitty's face as she put her small, rough, swollen hand into the old man's palm was such an eloquent response that Mr. Allamore, though not used to the melting mood, felt his eyes dimming as he said,

"And she loves you, Aaron, with a love that'll last till death."

"Ay, and longer!" said Aaron Brigham; then, turning "an aside" for the contractor's private ear, he said, "She's a jewel, an' a gem, an' a d'mond, sir, and so you'd say if you knew all I knoa. She's Tom Smart's one hope under God. I hope you'll listen to her."

"Well, but what about Smart? Do you honestly think there's any chance of his reform?"

"Yes," said the old man. "If he hez a fair chance, an' if good folks like you'll help him against hisself, I think he may be saved even yet. That lahtle lassie of his,"—pointing to the "little mother" by his side,— "hez melted his heart for him, an' he's under sitch good feelin's noo, that I should be thankful if yo'd give him a chance."

"But I thought Smart was employed by Farmer Barrass. Wouldn't it be better for him to take him on again?"

"If yo' please, sir," put in the anxious Kitty, "Farmer Barrass said he didn't want feyther ony mair; an' I wasn't sorry, 'cos he had to go by sae mony public-hooses to get there, that—that—O—I wish there wasn't one i' all Netherborough, that I do!"

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the prohibition platform favoured by every drunkard's child. Only give them the "local option vote," and they will soon make a clean sweep of the liquor trade! But "my faithful Lords and Commons" have such a reverent regard for the liberty of the subject that drunkard's wife and drunkard's child may perish in shoals, so long as the drunkard has the glorious freedom of getting drunk and plenty of facilities for keeping drunk so long as the noble freeman may like! My Lords and Gentlemen! Kitty Smart would give her heart's blood to save her feyther; she would, indeed. But she shan't, shall she? You'll take good care of that!

"If you'll let feyther work upo' your railway," continued Kitty, opening her big, round eyes in prospective wonderment of relief, "he wouldn't ha' to pass mair than one public-hoose, an' he could run past the door and ha' done wi' it! Please, sir, tek feyther on, else what shall I do to get 'm an' the childer bread?"

Mr. Allamore looked at the little plender in pity and in admiration. She did not reach much higher than his knee, and yet she was her father's protector and hope, the head of the family, the "mother" of the three smaller mortals

who had but her to look to. Kitty read his silence as a token of uncertainty and indecision. She clasped her little hands, and lifted them before him.

"O, if yo' please, sir. Gran'feyther, come an' help me!"

"Nay, nay, no need of that, my dear. I'll give your father work, little maiden. Let him come as soon as he likes; and, look here, there's half-a-crown for you to get the children something good." So saying, he laid his hand on the child's head, bade God bless her, and turned hastily away.

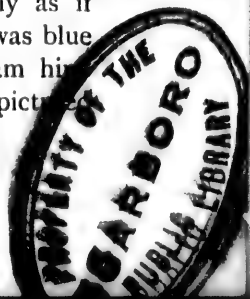
Aaron Brigham followed him.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "I should like another word wi' yo'. Me an' Kitty's goin' to tek it i' turns to bring her feyther an' fetch him ivery day, that is if yo' don't see any objection. And if yo' wadn't mind——"

"You would like me to keep an eye on him myself. To be sure I will, Aaron. I hope it will be the turning point of his life. That child of his is a perfect treasure."

"Yes," replied Aaron, "I think she is a fulfilment o' the Lord's prophecy, 'A little child shall lead them.' At any rate, Kitty's leadin' her feyther, nut from drink only, but to Jesus Hissself. O, Mr. Allamore, if it wasn't for t' public-houses, there wad be a chance of heaven eaven for poor, lost Tom Smart! But I'se sadly frightened they'll suck him in."

On their way homeward, little Kitty was in high spirits. She set to work, in true child fashion, to build castles in the air at a tremendous rate. What she was going to get for "the childer;" how she was going to get the house nice when she had a few shillings to spare; how feyther had promised to go to chapel with her when he got some tidier clothes—all was told trippingly and delightfully as if music was distilling from her tongue. Kitty's sky was blue that day, from horizon up to zenith. Aaron Brigham himself was infected by the hopeful atmosphere, and pict-



to himself Tom Smart "sitting clothed and in his right mind!"

At the corner of the Netherborough Green they parted. The aged lover took the smiling little maiden in his arms, and kissed her, and then turned his steps to the Spaldon Road, and the pleasant bowers of Lily Lodge, humming as he went :—

"Set free from present sorrow  
We cheerfully can say,  
E'en let the unknown morrow  
Bring with it what it may,  
It can bring with it nothing.  
But He will bear us through,  
Who gives the lilies clothing,  
Will clothe His children too."



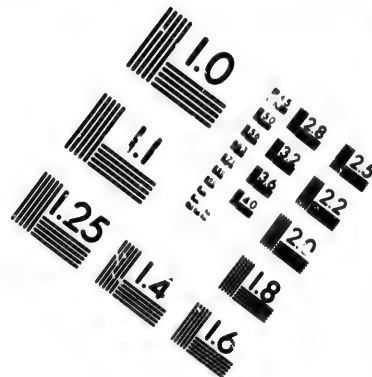
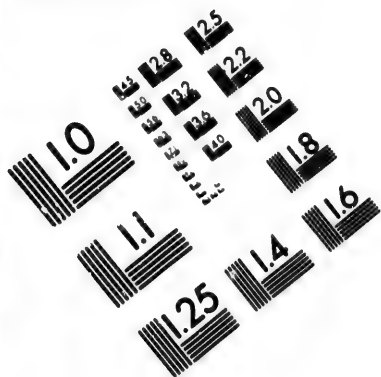
## CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN Kitty arrived at home, she found her father absent, and for a moment her heart sank within her. Her little sister, however, was able to assure her that Mr. Norwood Hayes had sent for feyther, to help to store a load of hay that had come to Throstle's Nest, and that feyther would be back soon. So our little, much-encumbered Martha, and her small lieutenant, made the bare house as tidy as circumstances would allow, and the half-crown was changed to provide father with a little relish when he should come home to tea. This, however, did not happen till the evening began to darken, for Alice Hayes had found something else for him to do, and, ultimately, when he did come, and found a cheery fire, and a fresh loaf and a savoury bloater, and some fragrant tea in the spoutless tea-pot, he was overwhelmed with astonishment and delight. And so was Kitty when feyther kissed her, and put into her hands a whole half-crown, which he had received in liberal payment for the work he had done at Throstle's Nest.

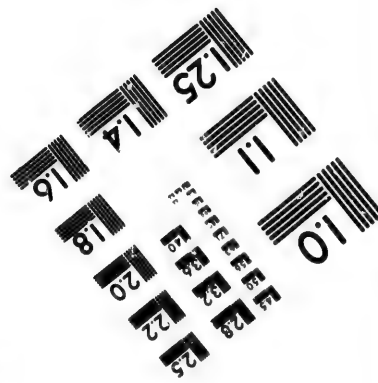
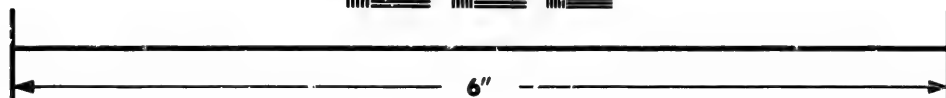
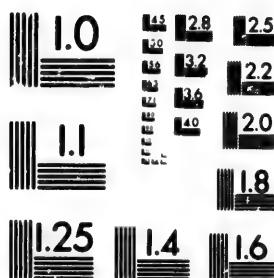
After tea, the chilther were put to bed, and the small lieutenant went along with them. Kitty and her father were alone. So she told him all that had happened in the interview with Mr. Allamore. Tom was silent. His eyes were closed; his chin drooped upon his breast. Kitty could hardly understand it. By-and-by she saw the tears stealing from under the closed eye-lids. She stole her wee hand into his big, brown palm. He heaved a great sigh, and looking at his little lassie, whom he valued now at something near her worth, he said,

“Kitty, my lass, we mun pray.”





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I do not think that Tom was suggesting actual prayer there and then. He was impressed with the greatness and the value of the opportunity that had come to him by the kindness of Mr. Allamore, and he was afraid of his own weakness. So he had suggested that they must ask help from God.

But Kitty was practical. Her religion was a thing of the present, and she was never more in the humour for prayer than she was there and then. So there and then she arose from the little stool on which she had been sitting, waited till her father rose, too, and then knelt by his side, her small hand still lying in his willing palm.

"Say summat, Kitty," said Tom, who was not learned in devotion.

Said Kitty, "Jesus, good Jesus, you does help poor little Kitty. Help poor feyther an' all. Do, please! Do! do! do!"

And Tom Smart said, "Amen!" as well as he could for the choking in his throat, and I don't think he could have said anything better. The angels said of him, "Behold, he prays!"

And Tom Smart was helped. He went to "The Works" on the morrow. Mr. Allamore spoke to him kindly, and put him on a job. He got through the day, and through many days, with good success. He and his wages both came home to Kitty; and Kitty, bless her, sang about her work.

Nobody was more highly delighted at the change which had come to Tommy Smart than was Mr. Norwood Hayes. In the course of a conversation with Walter Bardsley, his son-in-law elect, he said: "By the way, I'm glad to see that man Smart manages to keep himself sober. Well, I'm glad of it. He's a very decent fellow when he keeps away from the drink. Now that's a case," he added, laying his hand on the arm of the young man, "where teetotalism is really

a good thing. You will do me the justice to own, Walter, that I've never taken up a position in antagonism to total abstinence. For those who need it, it is the most splendid thing in the world, and Tom Smart could not possibly have done a wiser thing except, indeed, to give his heart to God, than to join the Temperance ranks. But, for those who do not need it, say what you like, Walter, it is the abnegation of self-rule. It is an acknowledgment of the total absence of backbone. The power to say, 'I will' is one of the most royal gifts of God; and when it comes to this, that you've got to sign your name in a book, or to be afraid to touch a thing lest it becomes your master—well, I call it a cowardly confession of weakness; and the man that has to do it is a mere mollusca, a gelatinous creature that can't stand without leaning, and can't walk without wobbling. Now let me put it this way, Walter, my boy, just for you to look at it fairly. Total abstinence is a good thing for Tom Smart, therefore total abstinence is a good thing for—Norwood Hayes."

No words of mine can describe the tone in which these last words were said. The whole contemptible biography of the drunken wastrel was compressed into the mere mention of his name, so offensively worthless did it sound. On the other hand, the way in which "Norwood Hayes" was uttered, made the contrast so intense, that Walter positively blushed to hear the two names linked together; for, as I have said before, Mr. Norwood Hayes was regarded as a sort of demi-god in the estimation of younger men. Tom Smart and Norwood Hayes! Walter could not, would not, in common sense and decency, bracket the two together! This triumphant piece of logic silenced him. And the same wretched sophistry on the part of highly moral and religious people, who nevertheless call themselves "miserable sinners" with more truth than they are aware of, is used to make abstinence principles contemptible to this day

One's comfort is that outsiders are beginning to see through it, and are themselves helping on the cause.

I am sorry to have to say it, but I am sketching from life, and must record the truth—Walter Bardsley's own attitude as an abstainer did not seem so manly after he had received that tremendous broadside—Tommy Smart *and* Norwood Hayes. "Two men went up to the temple *apar'* to pray."

Still, Mr. Hayes was delighted with the change which had come to poor Smart, not only for his own sake, but that of the little family dependent on him for bread. He sent to Aaron Brigham several bundles of clothing from Throstle's Nest, with certain special gifts from Alice for little Kitty, whom thoughtful Mr. Hayes remembered as the "old man's darling." Mr. Allamore and kindly Jennie Bardsley, too, helped to get the home of the Smarts a little more ship-shape, and in the course of a little while, what with Tom's wages and the aid of sympathetic friends, our sweet little Kitty was the proud mistress of a decent home, and "the chilther" smiled upon their little mother in clothing that did not make her cry to look upon; the rags were gone. Kitty was able now to bring her father to chapel. He had always said, ever since he had come to a better mind, at any rate, that he would go with her to chapel if he had some decent clothes to go in. His first purchase in this way was a pair of corduroy trousers, with a jacket and vest of fustian, wonderfully adorned with "pearl buttons"—navvy fashion, and I am glad to record that on the first day he donned his new attire, he was a worshipper on the "free seats" at Zion Chapel; that old Aaron sat beside him, and that beside *him* sat Kitty, in a neat little frock, which Jennie Bardsley had conjured out of Alice Hayes' silk spencer, and a pretty little straw hat that had once sat on Jennie's fair brow, and had been "made over" for the bonnie little maiden as good as new. I am not sure

that Kitty heard much of Mr. Dunwell's sermon that morning, but I *am* sure that she "had a good time," which proves that good times at chapel do not always depend upon the preacher. Note that well, my reverend friend in the pulpit, and ditto, my critical friend in the pew.

In course of time, for I must now push on these "simple annals of the poor," it was thought that Smart might well become a member of the church at Zion. There was a deep religious work going on in his heart and mind; thanks mainly to the little evangelist who had "talked te Jesus about feyther." His period of probation was made something longer than is usual, by way of prudent precaution, but he passed through it with credit, and definitely gained favour with the Church.

Of course there were some kind neighbours, mainly "good people," who had "no faith in him;" who had much to say about the goodness which is "like the morning cloud and the early dew;" who quite expected to see him return "like a dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire;" who said, "Well, I hope he'll keep his pledge, I'm sure, poor man, but there, one hasn't much confidence in such case."

Yes, there were these, plenty of them; there always are, more's the pity—good people, in their way, but it's the most detestable way to be good in that has hitherto been discovered! When we see a poor sinner fighting desperately with his own familiar devil, let us give him a cheer, and not damn him with faint praise; and if, like Bunyan's Christian, he gets flung on his back in the fight with Apollyon, don't say, "I was afraid he would fail;" go and seize the fallen man by the shoulder and help him up again, and give the devil a buffet for good comradeship.

And there were many who were not "good people," who did their best to trip up the feet of Tom Smart, and to force him back into the drink bondage from which, by a miracle,



he had escaped. O, but the way the drinkers do tempt the drunkard is torturing in its cruelty and ghastly in its fatal influence! On one occasion that I can well remember, some old cronies made a dead set at Tom as he passed the doors of the "Red Lion." They held him fast, and lifted a tankard of foaming treble X to his lips, and held it there. He was coming from work, tired and thirsty, and the temptation was terrible. Every nerve and muscle of his mouth and throat, every organ of sensation from lips to stomach wrought violently towards the inviting draught, and poor Tom was on the brink of Tophet once again!

At that moment a little child cried out "feyther!" Whose child it was, or what she wanted, he did not know; she was none of his. But none the less, she was God's merciful messenger, that unwitting "babe and suckling," for the cry reminded him of Kitty, and the thought of Kitty brought to mind that she "talked to Jesus about feyther." In a fit of desperation Tom suddenly struck out with his doubled fist. He sent the tankard and its contents flying like a bursten bombshell, and inflicted signal damage on the face of the leading bully of the gang. *He* touched his nose tenderly, when he dared to touch it at all, for many a long day!

With a rush that could not be checked, Tom escaped from his captors, ran the length of Southgate with them at his heels, and reached at last the threshold of his own home. Here they would have continued the struggle, but little Kitty came to the door and heard. She stepped in front of her feyther, now gasping for breath and sore-bestead, and lifting her rough little hardly-used hand in threatening fashion, exclaimed,

"God! Mak' 'em let me feyther be!"

The enemy fled, and there lives at this day one who still vividly remembers the aspect of the "lahtle lassie" as she

stood erect, inspired, beautiful, in the breach, with God between her father and his deadly foes!

"God! mak' 'em let me feyther be!" That is the cry of the drunkard's child against all the accursed workers of this foul iniquity. "How long, O Lord, how long!"

The fact I have just recorded, and some similar ones, were soon known. They won a great deal of sympathy for Tom, and it was felt by Mr. Dunwell, the pastor, and the Church at Zion, that the reformed drunkard, in his gallant fight with sin, *ought to have the help and the protection that brotherhood in a Christian church can give.* His Communion tickets are duly furnished, and it may become the happy privilege of the new member at "Zion" to go to the Lord's Table with the loving guests of Jesus at the Feast of Life.

## CHAPTER XXV.

WE must now return to the sad episode of Farmer Stipson. The sound of wedding bells is about to float in the Netherborough air, and we had better get the passing-bell hushed ere the merry melody falls upon our ears.

For some days after the fatal seizure laid hold upon him, Farmer Stipson lingered in the chill parlour of the "Griffin" with no hope of life. He had rallied a little after his wife's arrival, and was even able to make himself understood; but he never more left the bed on which they laid him until the grave was dug to receive him in the Scanton Churchyard. There they laid him among his own kith and kin, for he had come of an old stock.

That part of the village, God's-acre, which was shadowed by three ancient elms, was quite a Stipson colony in that small hamlet of the dead. There was scarcely one man of the name that had been buried there who had not come to his grave untimely, bereft of life by the manslayer, the familiar demon of the house of Stipson—Strong Drink.

This last unfortunate victim of the Evil Spirit had been making heroic efforts, giant efforts, for his wife and children's sakes to break away from the craft of the were-wolf that preyed upon his race. He might have won. His wife was full of hope. He might; but alas! the deacon of a Christian church put temptation in his way on the Sabbath he professed to honour; and pointing to a Christian minister, dallying with the wine-glass in his fingers, "You can't do better than follow a good example." The example was

followed, and a murdered man lies in a dishonoured grave ; a weeping widow covers a broken heart with sombre crape ; four child-orphans face the world with a taint in the blood and a stain on their names ! " Shall we not do well on a Sabbath Day ! "

Some little while before Stipson passed away, he sent for his four children. While they were being fetched, he made his wife and Jenny Bardsley fully understand the design he had in view. When the children arrived, Walter Bardsley was present with his pledge-book. Aaron Brigham was there to talk with God. Mamma explained to the wondering bairns what papa wanted them to do. The eldest, a fine fellow of nine, was able to write his name, the other three made a little cross, and the stricken father, weeping hot tears, was evidently praying all the while. He nodded to old Aaron, who knelt at the signal, all the little party, except the sick man, kneeling too.

" They've signed t' pledge, Lord, for their feyther's sake ; may they grow up to keep it an' honour it for their own. May they get mony to join 'em for the Saviour's sake. Help 'em to grow up to love an' follow Thee. May their feyther look down from his home in heaven to see 'em good an' safe an' happy, till they join him there. Amen, Lord. Amen. So be it ! And so it will be. George Stipson, you may die in peace."

The erring and repentant man did die in peace, for of all the great forgivers, and tender friends, Jesus, the sinner's Friend, is the tenderest and the greatest. The widowed mother held true and faithful to her trust. The taste of alcoholic liquors never touched the pure palate of her children. The curse of strong drink never had the chance to work its woeful spell around their lives. Farmer Stipson, the innocent boy George who signed that child-pledge, now grey with years, but strong and hale as a yeoman ought to

be, is a life-long abstainer, and so are all the healthy happy children that round his table grow.

O, ye fathers! ye mothers! ye who love your children as only parents may! turn this home-blight out of sight and reach for ever. Never give it place at your table; never give it shelter beneath your roof; and your children, and your children's children shall rise up to call you blessed!

Poor Walter Bardsley! It was your pledge-book that received that name, those crosses, the mother's name, that gave holy sanction to the children's vow. How glad and tender was your heart that day! How full of holy purposes for God and man when you pressed that night the pillow whereon you slept! But why should I say "*poor* Walter," then? and especially when the jocund wedding-bells fill the autumn air with merry music, because the sweet and dainty Alice Hayes is now all your own! Ah, why, indeed?

The balmy and golden October days were still lingering round the harvest-fields of Netherborough, now denuded of their waving wealth, when the *Netherborough Gazette* announced, in the stilted English of the time, that—"Our respected and popular young townsman, Mr. Walter Bardsley, is, we understand, about to lead to the hymeneal altar Miss Alice Hayes, the beautiful and highly-accomplished daughter of one of our foremost and most highly-esteemed citizens, Mr. Norwood Hayes. We need scarcely say that Netherborough has only one voice on this auspicious occasion, and that voice says loudly, heartily, repeatedly, 'Long life and happiness to the youthful pair.'" The provincial poet, whose astounding effusions found an honoured place in the poet's corner of the *Gazette*, went into rhythmic ecstasies twenty stanzas long, which, having regard for my readers, I forbear to quote.

I have not time nor space, and I may as well own it, nor talents, to describe the wedding, or to do justice to all the bright events that marked the wedding-day. When it is

remembered, however, that the happy father of the bride, Mr. Norwood Hayes, had the thing in hand, it will be fully understood that in all respects the "function"—that is the fashionable word now, I believe—was elaborate, æsthetic, imposing! Mr. Hayes was not the man to do anything by halves.

Alice certainly did look splendid, and I know a lady who has just filled up the new census paper, who remembers the wedding, and she says that "the sun never shone on a bonnier bride than Alice Hayes." I am not clear about that myself. I think I know of one other that the sun shone on who could give Alice a point or two, and win.

However, that's neither here nor there; the dear, sweet lassie in her bridal veil and orange blossom was justly admired by all beholders; and everybody called Walter Bardsley a proud and happy man, whose wondrous fortune had won him such a wife!

I need scarcely say that Mr. Norwood Hayes was in his element on that auspicious day, and that he performed the part of master of the ceremonies so well that one might think he had been "brought up to it."

I cannot report that the blonde lady in the much-ribboned cap, who sat to the left of the bride at the wedding breakfast, succeeded in making any strong impression that day. Yes she did, twice. Once when she expressed her warm opinion that one of the best things about a good wedding was the abundance of champagne it brought to the table, not for show, but for use! and again in the after part of the day, when it was found desirable to conduct her to her private apartments, on the ground that "one of her dreadful headaches had come on!"

While the Netherborough bells were ringing out the wedding chimes; while the Netherborough celebrated brass band was playing the wedding-march, and sundry other wedding music; while yards and yards of broad white

ribbon were being run for by local racers in the Scanton Lane, the wedding breakfast was being held on a scale worthy of the dainty Throstle's Nest and of Mr. Norwood Hayes, and that is saying much, as my readers have come full well to know.

Mark you, I am recording here the things that I do know, and I tell you that "the wedding breakfast, at Throstle's Nest, when Walter Bardsley and Alice Hayes were wed," is remembered at this day by some who were present, and one there is, at any rate, who declares that she "*may* have been at a nicer, but never at a grander, wedding-breakfast than that was." I might as well say that I am of the same opinion, except that instead of "*may* have," it should be "*has*." Surely I ought to know, for wasn't I there to see?

To say that the young bridegroom, Walter Bardsley, was in high spirits, is to put it just about as mildly as the truth will bear, and so elated over the capture he had made, that whether he was in the body or out of the body, he scarce could tell; one thing he knew—that Alice Hayes was his wife, and that Norwood Hayes had become his father.

The toasts at the wedding-breakfast, for even Mr. Hayes was slave enough to keep the idiotic foolery agoing, were numerous; and those who proposed, and those who seconded, did their parts exceedingly well. Specially did the Reverend Daniel Dunwell acquit himself when he proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom.

He spoke warmly, as well he might, of the young bridegroom's many excellencies, and declared him to be emphatically a boon to Netherborough, and one of its most rising men. It was true, he said, that Walter had a croquet or two which he was a little too much inclined to ride hard, but "no doubt," he said, "he will either ride them to death, and so have done with them, or his charming young wife will draw him out of the saddle and find him a seat in a

happier place, at her own side. As to his fair partner in life, who, I dare say, though always beautiful, never looked so beautiful as she does to-day, she will soon induce him to put these crochets away, as he has already put away all other childish things. One of the fairest and most hopeful prophecies of their happy future is to be found in this, that they both know something of the bettering and brightening influence of true religion (O, Reverend Daniel), and *that* will secure them a fair breeze and a blue sky, as they sail together the sea of life. And if now and then storms should arise and tempests prevail, that, and the love they bear each other, will enable them to outride them all and glide at last into the fair havens we all hope to win. God grant it! I propose—"The bride and bridegroom!"

Then everybody present arose, and said, "The bride and bridegroom!" for which, as the expression of their good wishes, they may be forgiven; and everybody lifted a glass to their lips, and drunk something, for which each one of them, except for custom's patronage, might well have said, with Dogberry, "Write me down an ass."

Then the bridegroom arose to respond. He was agitated, nervous, and not by any means, just then, the "good impromptu speaker" he was known to be in general. Nevertheless, he managed to say something of what was in his heart; making no reference to the rub at his teetotal crotchet; but confining himself mainly to his sense of the value of the prize he had won. In conclusion he earnestly, and a little too gushingly, affirmed, that in striving to be worthy of his "peerless wife," he should anticipate her every wish, and ungrudgingly work her will rather than his own, "that is to say in the few instances in which their wills should not be one."

From this last quotation from his wedding-speech, many of my readers will doubtless come to the conclusion that Walter Bardsley was not a very wise man—eh? Perhaps



not, but I should like to know what *you* said, Mr. Critic, when the orange flowers were nodding at your side, and the wedding-cake rose like Mount Blanc before your eyes, and your responsive speech was dribbling from your quaking lips—equal, if not superior, nonsense, I'll be bound! Let all this, however, be as it may, the happy party at Throstle's Nest approved of Walter Bardsley's pledge of obedient love, and when he sat down, the cheers that rose from all and sundry might well make "the welkin ring."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

**B**Y-AND-BYE, as the wedding-feast proceeded, it became Walter's duty to propose a toast, the health of Mr. and Mrs. Norwood Hayes, his new parents-in-law. Here, Walter was much more at home. It is true that he did not say much about the lady in this case. He could not very well make bricks without straw. To the few words he did say, that interesting but retiring lady listened with bland smiles, playing the while with the empty champagne glass which she dearly wanted to see filled again, and which, if she had been permitted, she would have emptied again in her own honour with alacrity and delight. Turning to the subject of his father-in-law, Walter felt no such restrictions. If ever Walter Bardsley loved, honoured, revered Norwood Hayes, he did so that day. He spoke what was in his heart, and so he spoke feelingly, gratefully, and well. He declared that for years past he had sought to form his own character on the model of the father of his winsome wife. "And now," said he, in conclusion, "I shall have her counsel and aid in making the study of that character more thorough, and as I dearly hope, of making that likeness more perfect and complete. With my whole heart I propose this toast, and ask you to receive it in like fashion—'Mr. and Mrs. Nor—'"

"What! in water?"

The speaker who had thus interrupted the warm-hearted and impulsive young bridegroom was his own brother Dick; and the amount of surprise and disgust and ashamedness that the elder brother managed to crowd into the three

short words might well have upset the nerves of a stronger man than Walter, and on a less exciting occasion than that of making a wedding-speech.

"No, no; oh, no," came from the lips of the entire company. Temperance principles were not strong in those days, and, least of all, in Netherborough. The utterance of that strong, reproachful, and deprecating negative displayed a unanimity which showed Walter that he stood alone.

"Well," Walter thought to himself, "I can stand alone," and lifting his champagne glass filled with water from the well, he said aloud,

"Yes, in water. I am—"

The sentence was never finished. While Mr. Hayes was toying with his glass, with a smile that said as plain as plain could be, "What a small matter to dispute about," the charming Alice, Walter's winsome bride, looking really bewitching in her bridal robes, arose to her feet, and with a bright, loving, free smile of utmost and assured confidence, took Walter's glass of water from his hand, and presented him instead with a bumper of champagne, saying, as she could say it,

"Dear *husband*, for father's sake and mine."

Then she lifted those soft blue eyes of hers, with their silent love-depths surging to his own, and waited. The cheers that greeted what they called Alice's "little love-trick" brought a couple of rosebuds to her cheeks. All this, and the word *husband*, now first spoken by the lips of his darling, compelled him to give way. He took the champagne, kissed her in return for it, and, unfamiliar with the ethics of toast-drinking, drank it off at a single draught! It may well be doubted whether the cheers that greeted him were ever so loud, so lusty, as those which approved him then. The fall of an avalanche that buries a village and smothers out happy lives, makes thunder adown the

valley, and on that dark day the fall of a man made fearful noise ; fearful, dreadful, for it came from the lips of men and women who cheered to see him fall.

Mr. Norwood Hayes responded to the toast when silence was at last obtained. He spoke of Walter most lovingly, no senior could speak with heartier appreciation of a junior than he did of the young man who, as he said, "had crept into Throstle's Nest, and had come to be beloved by him as dearly as any of the brood." Then he went on to say, "I am proud to call the bridegroom of the day my son, my dear son, my beloved son, a relationship which he and my own brave, bright boy, Cuthbert, shall share and share alike. I am prouder of him now than ever—now that he drops all anti-social crotchets, and chooses to stand before the world in the strength of independent manhood, loyal to the true law of life, the supreme kingliness of self-control. I predict for my son and daughter a happy and prosperous future, and I do this not only because I have faith in their love for each other, and their ability to make their way in life, but because I know them to be possessors of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and I, for one, believe that to be the best guarantee for a prosperous and happy career. I pray, God bless them ! And may God bless us every one !"

Of course, all this was greeted with immense applause. And yet, I think, there was greater applause in the halls of "devils damned" that morning, that a bride should lead her newly-wedded husband to break his vow, and that a father, and he the highly-respected deacon of a Christian Church, should speak in language of warm approval of the perilous and ignominious deed !

Walter Bardsley listened for the happy chiming of the wedding-bells—he loved the bells of Netherborough—but they had suddenly become silent, strangely silent, and an awful stillness fell upon his own soul. He looked upon the face of his sister, Jennie, and read an unnamed horror

there. Her face was as white as a shroud, and her dark, expressive eyes seemed to blaze upon him with apprehension and alarm. Then he remembered how his father and his brother had been slain by the insidious murderer whom he had now made friends with, and how, for generations, the same death-dealer had been the hereditary enemy of his house. He remembered how good old Aaron Brigham had bared his white head before him, and said, "Walter Bardsley, will you stand firm?" and he had said, speaking as in the sight of God, "I will!" And now—! He wondered now whether he should ever, ever, ever hear the chiming of the bells again! Perhaps this looks like writing for a moral. It is the handwriting of Truth: and on the face of Jennie Bardsley, and in the sad silence of the bells, that seemed as though they could not fling out their music to prophesy a lie, Walter read the Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, that told him of a weighing in the balance and a kingdom lost!

The after part of the proceedings interested him no more. In due time his young brother-in-law, Cuthbert Hayes, rose to respond to the toast of "The Bridesmaids." Young, handsome, ready-tongued, and witty, the stalwart Cuthbert looked every inch a man. He too, made a pleasant joke of Walter's prompt obedience to the wishes of his wife. "He has given splendid hostage," said he, "for the loyalty of his love and devotion in leaping from his hobby at my sister's loving call. The young ladies, charming maidens every one of them, have seen and heard, and each in turn will exercise the sweet, decisive authority over their captive but honoured and happy slaves. When that time comes—as the immortal Gilpin says, 'May I be there to see.'"

Yes, he looked a bright, brave youth that sunny autumn morning, did Cuthbert Hayes; but what meant the heightened colour in his cheek? What meant the unnatural fire in his eye? What meant the little unsteady-

ness in his voice? And how was it that Dick Bardsley whispered to Mr. Dunwell, who sat near him,

"Bertie hasn't waited for *his* wife's orders on the subject. I'm afraid she will have to put the stopper on instead of drawing out the cork."

And what, O what, made him laugh and wink as he said it, as though it was an amusing joke! Mr. Dunwell, let us give him credit for it, shook his head and sighed.

On the young bridegroom a great horror had fallen, a horror thickened in its darkness by the contemplation of Cuthbert's over-excited state. As soon as he decorously could he went out, and like sinning Peter, he wept bitterly. He was so deeply distressed that he became downright ill. He felt that his condition was such as must strike a chill through all the guests at the grand marriage feast. He tried to "pull himself together," and was alarmed and ashamed to find that it could not be done!

The guests had retired to the drawing-room. He stole away awhile from all. He was ill, miserable, desperate, self-condemned. Suddenly he rushed back to the forsaken feast, seized a half-empty champagne bottle, poured out a tumbler-full and drank it off, and then felt better, felt strong, felt manly, like his father-in-law, felt that he could hold up his head and defy the world! O wondrous power of alcohol to make the coward brave!

Now it so happened that the Reverend Daniel Dunwell had left his pocket handkerchief behind him when he left the breakfast-table. He returned to find it, and found also the bridegroom with the tumbler at his lips. Then did he sorrow that Dick Bardsley had objected to Walter's drinking to the toasts in water. He said to himself, "What a pity Dick interfered." But he did *not* say, "What a shame the young man's pastor did not help him to stand firmly to his guns!"

Then did the genial minister withdraw in silence, and, let

us hope, with some degree of shame ; but, why, oh why, did he not, there and then, lay his hand on his young friend's shoulder and say, "Walter, for the love of God, get back to your first position and renew your vow?" Why? Because his own attitude on the drink question demanded silence, silence even though doom and death were at the door.

O, reverend brethren, who stand in Christ's stead, suffer a repentant brother to press this thought home, the thought of the paralysis of power that comes by the indulgence, however moderate, in that which makes a poor brother to offend, to his own eternal detriment and loss.

Let me be just to Daniel Dunwell. He was a fine fellow, a good man in the malformed shape in which social custom, religious allowance, and conventional usage had moulded him, a mould which, more than any open enmity to Christ, hinders the work, undoes the labour, and damns the efforts of the Christian Church to-day!

During the after part of the day, when Walter Bardsley and his happy wife had left for Scarborough, for at "the queen of watering-places" they had decided to spend the honeymoon, Mr. Norwood Hayes and Mr. Dunwell were walking in the pretty park-like grounds of Throstie's Nest, enjoying each of them a post-prandial cigar. They were met by Jennie Bardsley, who was sauntering alone in self-communing spirit, with a deathly pallor, born of some great trouble-shock, upon her face.

Mr. Hayes, as usual, greeted her with smiling courtesy and a pleasant joke.

"Well, friend Jennie," said he, "of course, you expended a bag of rice and a slipper on the young folks as they went away?"

But Jennie was in no jesting mood just then. She stopped in the middle of the pathway, and like the Ancient Mariner, "held them with her eye."

"Mr. Hayes," she said, "what slew Reuben Stanford?"

"Nay, nay, do not call up things sorrowful to-day. It was strong drink, I suppose."

He spoke a little brusquely for him, and would have passed on.

"Mr. Dunwell," she asked again, in tones that might not be pooh-poohed, "What was it that slew Farmer Stipson?"

"Strong drink, no doubt," said the minister, who was always candid and straightforward.

"Yes," she said, lifting her finger to give force to her strong words, and speaking as Deborah, the prophetess, might be supposed to do: "Yes; and strong drink will slay Walter Bardsley; thanks to his pastor, and to him who has been his guide, philosopher, and friend."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Hayes, testily; "no croaking on a wedding-day." He spoke off-handish, but there was an unwonted frowning of his brow.

And what did the excellent pastor say?

Mr. Dunwell called to mind what he had seen in the dining-room that morning, and said, NOTHING!



## CHAPTER XXVII.

WHILE the merry wedding guests at Throstle's Nest—for it must not be supposed that Walter Bardsley's broken vow interfered at all with their delight—were celebrating the happy event by games and dance and song, our good old friend, and as I hope our favourite, Aaron Brigham, was quite otherwise engaged.

The old man had been invited to the wedding, and there is no doubt that he would have received the warmest kind of welcome, for Aaron was held in highest honour and esteem. Being "found in the way of righteousness," his white head was "a crown of glory," and would have been accounted, in any Netherborough household, a halo in whose brightness it were pleasant and good to sit.

But Aaron could not be induced to accept the invitation.

"There isn't a soul i' Netherborough that wishes the young pair a better wish than I do, or that prays mair fervently that the good Lord will bless 'em, an' mak' 'em a blessing all the days o' their lives. But I'se expectin' that you'll be hevin' all sorts o' wine, an' champagne, an' sperrits upo' t' table. I can't be a party to ony sitch a miserable start at t' beginnin' o' married life, Mr. Hayes: an' I'se a bit surprised that young Walter 'll stand it. I think he wadn't if it was anywhere else; but he hez a notion that Mr. Norwood Hayes is aboot perfect, an' can't mek a mistake. I trust an' pray he may'nt live to find oot that *he's* made one, an' that a dreadful big 'un. I'se sorry to say No, Mr. Hayes; but I'se foorced to respect my conscience, an' I can't go again it, no, not eaven for your sweet lassie, the bonnie bride. And, noo, hoo's Mrs. Hayes?"

The old man blushed like a schoolboy, old as he was, as soon as the words were spoken, for he had only intended a courteous inquiry, and, lo ! he had aptly opened the door of the closet where the skeleton at Throstle's Nest was kept. Mr. Hayes answered, rather shortly for him, that she was "only poor!" expressed his regret at the old man's refusal, and turned away. O, that particular kind of skeleton ! How many, many homes are compelled to give the grim inmate house room !

Mr. Hayes was a good deal disturbed in mind. That last unintentional fling back of the closet door, made his standing ground a little shaky, and to him that was most unpleasant. He was constrained to turn back, for a helpful second-thought had come to him.

"I say, Aaron," he said, "I don't want to interfere too much with your prejudices, but I do think you might give way on this point. You may surely do what your Divine Master and mine thought it no harm to do. He was not only the Guest at a marriage feast where wine was provided, but he actually supplied them with abundance of it when the stock ran short. What can you say to that."

"What can I say?" said Aaron, drily, "why, I can say this, that if this was Galilee, an' Jesus was t' chief Guest, an' t' wine was t' same soort, an' t' best wine was made i' t' same way, an' He gav' orders to 'serve it out,' I might mebbe tek' some of it ; but I don't believe that He wad wish me to drink, if I'd reither nut, an' I'se mair than sure that He wadn't ha' had it there at all if there was onybody there that was perillin' body an' soul by drinkin' it—I ax your pardon, Mr. Hayes, I do sincerely. I didn't mean to—"

He said no more, but stood with bowed head and blushing face, for he had "put his foot in it" a second time, and Mr. Norwood Hayes had walked off towards Throstle's Nest at the rate of a good four miles an hour !

On the evening of the wedding-day, Aaron Brigham, as I have said, was otherwise engaged. On the morning of that day he had met George Caffer at the door of the church, just before the wedding party had arrived.

"Mornin', Aaron," said the bibulous painter. "Then you've come to see 'em worked off, ha' yo'? There'll be famous doin's at Throstle's Nest to-day. All t' toon'll hev a lively time on it. Ah've given myself a holiday. It's a poor heart that niver rejoices, an' I respect both t' bride an' bridegroom a good deal. Ah's bound te drink their varry good health. Ha' yo' seen owt o' Phil Lambert?"

"No, I ain't," said the old man, sadly, for he perceived that painter and barber both were about to give themselves up to a drunken spree. His heart was filled with pity for the poor sodden pair of toppers, and he longed with an eager longing to put them on a better track. He had prayed for them many a time and oft, and many a time and oft had expostulated with them, singly and together. While Caffer was telling him of his beery purpose, Aaron sighed a "God help 'em!" and straightway a new idea, and a new hope, and a renewed purpose took possession of him. He knew that the sottish cronies were kindly disposed, warm-hearted fellows enough when free from the influence of drink—I think that most of the victims of intemperance are—and he resolved once again to assault the citadel of appetite, and capture and release the imprisoned man within; to pluck these brands from the burning. O, if it only might be! "Might be? It shall!" said he, and there and then was born in him that faith that

"Laughs at impossibilities  
And cries, 'It shall be done!'"

And so when Caffer asked him if he had seen anything of Phil Lambert, he replied,

"No, I ain't, but I've seen his wife, poor soul! Caffer, I

knoa that you've gotten a kind heart o' your own. I wish you wad go wi' me efter t' wedding. You can do another good fellow as good a turn, an' better then you ivver did i' your life. Will yo' oblige ma'?"

"Ah wad do owt fo' *you*, Aaron, owd friend, same as iverybody else i' Netherbro' wad, if they had the chance."

"Ah believe you wad, George. Ah believe you wad; if nobbut you—but niver mind that. Ah'll wait fo' yo' at t' chotch door."

The marriage service was very impressive and affecting. The vicar put his heart into his work, and in a few well-chosen words as an addendum to the ordinary ritual, treated, not only the wedding-party, but the spectators, to a display of feeling not too common on such occasions.

Old Aaron Brigham was delighted and thankful to observe that the eyes of George Caffer were well filled with tears which he furtively wiped away. The two men met at the church door, according to arrangement, and as they sauntered along the churchyard path, Aaron said,

"They seem to be mekin' a happy start, them two young folks, George. I'se hopeful that they'll be both comfortable an' prosperous. It's rare thing for them that Walter's dead again drink, now, isn't it?"

"Ah weean't deny it, Aaron. I isn't sitch a fool as not to knoa. Drink's the devil, an' ruins iverything. Ah knoa what's best if Ah don't do it. Ah nobbut wish Ah did."

Caffer sighed heavily as he spoke, and Aaron—prayed. As they approached the little barber's shop, a low and mean looking abode, though it did stand in the market-place, Caffer became slightly restive.

"Wheear are we goin'? Ah don't want shavin'," said he, with a faint smile at his own small joke.

"Mebbe not," replied the old man, just then in his most genial mood. "The errand we've come on is to do a

kindness for another, not for owt we want ourselves. Come in."

Aaron turned in at the doorway underneath the barber's pole, whose stripes of white and red, and whose gilded knob sadly needed such brightening up as painter Caffer could only supply, for Netherborough held George Caffer to be "a splendid fellow at his trade," a knight of the brush that all Yorkshire would "find it hard to beat."

Yes, the miserable captives of Alcohol are in the main not only kindly and genial, but it will often be found that they are in possession of more genius and greater skill than their compeers in whatever trade or profession they may be, so that society is robbed of its cleverest exponents by that robber-in-chief, strong drink.

Aaron Brigham walked straight through the shop into the small living-room, that lay to the right of it, and was followed by Caffer, who did not feel much at home, although he had, in days "lang syne," been there before. That was while yet he and his crony, the barber, were moderate drinkers, and both Lambert's home and his own were bright and cosy, homes of peace and plenty, and when a comely, well-clad wife and mother was the pride of each.

The scene that greeted Caffer's shrinking gaze was of a widely different sort. The room was clean. Susie Lambert held by that relic of the old and happy times, and would do, though she died on her knees with the pail by her side, and the floor-cloth in her feeble hand. But the evidences of the most sordid poverty and starvation were on every hand. "Susie," as Caffer himself used to call her in neighbourlike and familiar fashion in the old, respectable days, was seated in an old arm-chair, her head reclining on a pillow, and her face all but as white as it, for Susie must have clean linen, that is to say, so far as she can have it at all. There was nothing on the blank walls of the room

except a coloured print or two, unframed, and tacked on with nails, which had been given to the children by their teachers at the Sunday School. What little furniture there was left was broken, and all but worthless, wretched relics of happier times. There was no fire in the grate, though the year was rapidly creeping on to chill November, and Yorkshire folk are partial to a "bit o' fire" pretty well all the year round. On the table was a quartern loaf, a bit of "dripping," a substitute for the butter that might not be had, and a mug of tea, the gift of a neighbour, who knew that Susie Lambert was "varry bad," which means that she was ill, very ill indeed. Two or three children, also clean, considering, but wan and thin, and little more than half clad, were sitting on the floor, the eldest trying to keep quiet a baby which was loudly protesting in its own way that it wanted food, and the others making play with a couple of thread-reels and a bit of string, which, by the wondrous alchemy of childhood, had been turned into a couple of prancing steeds, and the "reins," by which they were held in fine control.

The sight was pitiful, most pitiful, and George Caffer, who had just been talking with Aaron Brigham of the happy couple for whom the marriage bells were chiming, felt a creeping feeling of horror stealing over him—and of shame.

"Why, Susie, my lass," he said, "I niver knew that things was so bad as this wi' yo'. Hoo d'ye feel this mornin'?"

"Feel?" said the poor, despairing woman, "I don't feel; I've gotten past it; an' if it wasn't for t' bairns, nowt would suit me sae weel as layin' me down te dee."

"Nay, nay, nay!" said Caffer, with a burst of feeling, "that can't be; that shan't be. Ah'll—"

"How can it be helped, George Caffer, while you and Phil spend half your time and all your money at the 'Black Swan?' O, George, George! You were a good, kind fellow once; but I wish to God my husband had niver known yo',

an' that you had niver darkened our door! Ah'm goin te dee, George Caffer," continued the excited woman, lifting up her two thin hands as if about to imprecate the judgment of heaven, "and I call—"

"Stop, Susie, stop, Ah can't bide it!" said the scared painter. "Ah's sorry an' 'sham'd. What can I do—"

"Do!" said the woman, springing to her feet, and placing her trembling hands on Caffer's shoulder, "Ah'll tell yo' what yo' can do." Here she dropped her voice to a hoarse whisper: "You took my man Phil te t' 'Black Swan,' an, this is what's come on it. *George Caffer*, bring him out again, an' Ah'll bless yo' on my bended knees!"

Susie Lambert could say no more, she sank all but exhausted into her chair, with her questioning eyes fixed, fixed like barbed hooks, on Caffer's face. The look held him, drew him. For one moment he made a pause.

"Speak, George, lad, an' save 'er life," said old Aaron, who had been a silent observer, and a talker with God.

"Susie!" said Caffer, and there was a look on his face that had not been there for many a long year. "What you ask me shall be done. Ah'll bring Phil oot o' t' 'Black Swan,' an' Ah'll keep him oot. Ah will, Susie, Ah will, owd lass. Ah will by the help of God!"

"Cheer up, Mrs. Lambert," chimed in the delighted Aaron, "I've faith i' George, I'll help him all I can, an' you an' me both on us knoa hoo to ask of God." Here he put a little money on the table, quietly, promised to send his housekeeper, Esther, to her help, and left the room. Caffer had seen the coin secretly laid upon the table, and his heart went out to the old man in love and honour. He had but one coin, half-a-crown in his own pocket, but it quietly went to bear the old man's shilling company. It was intended for the day's carousals, but its course was graciously diverted, and the "Black Swan" that had known him for many a wasted year, was doomed to know him no more for ever!

"I think you can save poor Susie's life, friend Caffer. I think you can save Phil, poor fellow, both body and soul."

But Caffer had become strangely quiet. Not one word did he say. Aaron pressed him a little.

"Don't yo' think sae, George?" he said, gently and persuasively. Caffer stood still, and said, as he looked anxiously at his venerable companion,

"But hoo sall Ah save myself, Aaron? There's the rub. Ah niver thowt about that till Ah lost sight o' poor Susie Lambert's white fecace. Ah wad if Ah could, but—"

"Could!" said Aaron, laughing lightly, as if in the fulness of a great confidence, but quite as well aware as Caffer of the difficulties in the way. "Could! Of course you can. You an' the Lord God Almighty can do that, George, my boy, an' a good deal more. I should like to help you at it, an' I've just thowt of a way. Lily Lodge wants paintin' badly, both ootside an' in. I been thinkin' o' hevin' it done for a year or two back. It'll want two cooats o' paint at leeast, mebbe three. Noo I'll give the job to yo', an' I'll feed an' sleep you while it's done. We can agree aboot that when we settle aboot wages. Or I can feed yo' an' yo' can sleep at your oan hoose. My Esther can mek' yo' as mitch tea an' coffee as yo' like, or you can ha' milk—owt that I can get yo' but beer or ony of its relations. They'll niver come into Lily Lodge until Good Friday falls on Ash Wednesday, an' nut then."

Wonderful was the relief, wonderful the light that came on the poor toper's face. Everybody had "given him up." It is wonderful how many Christian people there are who do that in the case of confirmed and inveterate drunkards. They profess to believe in the limitless power of prayer, in the mighty possibilities of faith, in the wonderful "Whatsoevers" that fell from the lips of Jesus Christ, and yet they "give him up"—that poor, lost, nerveless slave of alcohol, after one or two defeated efforts to break the chains that



bind him. Surely this is a libel on their religion, and is only calculated to proclaim upon the house-top that their profession, as in the case of Peter Bell's promise, is "that and nothing more."

Here, in Aaron Brigham, true man of God, and friend of man, he found not counsel only or faith in him, but *help*—help that was to be *sustained* help; and that's where the impulsive and short-lived efforts to rescue the drunkard, fail; they are not continuous in their cost and labour, "It's of no use, you know." The shepherd tracked the sinful, wandering, and bedraggled sheep "until he found it," and that was how he came to bring it home.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SO Aaron was minded to keep his hand on Caffer, and even if the painting of Lily Lodge is done without permanent effect upon the man, he will find some way of keeping up the siege until the citadel is captured, and the "strong man armed" expelled for ever. Yes, Caffer's soul was all alive with hope; his heart throbbed with a new life; his face bore the glow of a high resolve.

"Aaron Brigham," said he, grasping him by the hand, "by the mercy of God and you, I'm a saved man!"

"God grant it," said Aaron Brigham, and the angels said, "Amen!"

"When sall Ah begin?" said Caffer.

"Why, just noo, to be sure, things 'll want cleanin' doon before you put t' paint on. Let's get to work at once."

Nothing loath, the painter went with him to Lily Lodge, and was soon at work with pail and soap and scrubbing brush, preparing the woodwork for its first coat of paint. Esther Harland was told to provide him with something to drink, and then, as soon as he well could, Aaron Brigham went in search of Phil Lambert, on whom he had designs of a similar sort. He could not help smiling at the thought that as he had captured Caffer by the bait of Phil Lambert's possible salvation, and of his wife's recovered health and happiness, so he would try to save Lambert by holding out the same inducement. Caffer might be rescued from the drunkard's fate if Phil Lambert would join him, Aaron Brigham, in this holy hunt for the emancipation of a soul. That was the way he meant to put it. As he paced the

Spaldon Road towards the little shop in the market-place with its variegated pole, the prayers of the good man were neither few nor feeble that in this mission also God might be with him.

The barber was not at home; he very seldom was. "Ha' you any idea where I shall drop on to him?" he asked the eldest girl, who was standing at the shop-door with the restless baby in her arms.

"I expect you'll niver miss 'im if yo' call at the 'Black Swan'" she said. "Feyther's there a good deal mair then he's here. Ah wish he'd stop there, that I do."

As she spoke, the girl, who was very pretty, some twelve years of age, perhaps, frowned and nodded her head, as much as to affirm that whether he stopped there or not, if she had her will he should never darken the doors of home any more.

"He's killin' poor mother," she said, "Ah can see her sinkin' ivery day," and here the poor lassie's anger gave way to grief, and she burst into tears.

"There's hope for your feyther, Nelly. Be patient. Help your mother, she'll get better. There's a good time comin' for you all." What could she do but smile on the old man? Smiles are the blossoms of the Kindness Plant.

A casual inquiry elicited the information from a person whom the old man met, that Phil Lambert had been seen near his old haunt, the "Black Swan." Aaron Brigham followed at full speed, so anxious was he to intercept and capture his longed-for prize before he entered the open door. Aaron was a sight to see. His long and silky white hair was streaming in the morning's breeze under pressure of the pace at which he walked; and the vigorous strides, that showed how thoroughly his heart was in his errand, might well have done credit to threescore years rather than fourscore years and four.

But it was not to be. No sooner did the old man catch

sight of the swinging sign, than he perceived the thirsty barber on the threshold ; in another instant he was lost to view. Aaron hardly knew what to do, and felt half inclined to retrace his steps. If the liquor were already lifted to the toper's lips, farewell hope, for Phil left no heel-taps from his "morning pint."

But Aaron had taken in a large access of faith and courage that morning, and breathing out a new prayer to Him who had charged him with the godly errand, he pressed forward, and for the first time for many a year, found himself inside a public-house. Fortunately for the old man's purpose, Stubbs, the landlord, was in a grievous temper. His frowning brows and flashing eyes were bent upon the luckless barber, who was standing limp and helpless, and quite dumbfounded, in presence of a long, long array of chalk-marks, which represented Lambert's formidable unpaid score.

"Look here, Lambert," said the irate landlord, "Ah've had quite plenty o' this, an Ah's goin' to put the stopper on. Nae mair brass, nae mair beer. Do yo' hear that, yo' raskil? Look at them chalk-marks standin' up one aside t' other, like a regiment of soldiers, an' ivery one on 'em says, 'Stump up or stump oot!'"

"Stump oot, Phil, stump oot, my lad," said Aaron, laying a kindly hand on the barber's shoulder, "an' I'll stump along wi' yo'. An' if you'll tek' my advice, you'll niver stump in again. Come along!"

Lambert was wrathful, and had not Aaron Brigham been present, I think there would have been passionate fisticuffs, for the barber was pugnacious ; but the old man's influence was all for peace, and his hand was permitted to rest upon the half-lifted arm. Lambert looked at him steadily, silently, reverently. He looked on Stubbs, and read in his grey eyes nothing but anger and contempt. He drew himself up to his full height, and said, with an emphatic

nod, "Good-bye, Nat Stubbs. Ah'll darken your doors  
nae mair."

Without another word he followed Aaron into the street. What a change had come across the man's features! Resolve was carven in every wrinkle; it seemed to weld his lips together, and burn in either eye. When they reached the middle of the street, he stood looking at the swinging sign. For more than twenty years he had carried all his hard earnings to the nest of that evil bird, and now the bare-faced Boniface, whom he had enriched, had—well, the fact is, Phil Lambert had received a revelation. He looked at the bird of evil omen bedizened with its chain of gold; he took off his hat to it; he bent his head almost to the ground in low obeisance, and then as silently turned away.

"The last time, Phil?" inquired old Aaron, fairly trembling with anxiety.

"*And the last glass, Aaron*, so help me, God! That's my vow, old man, an' that's my prayer!"

"Amen!" shouted Aaron, loud enough for all the street to hear; and rubbing his hands together with glad excitement. Aaron was a happy man that morning. Whether he was in the body or out of it, he scarce could tell.

"Do you knoa," continued Aaron Brigham, "that I was comin' to the 'Black Swan' for you. The Lord sent me jist at t' proper tahme."

"For me?" said Phil. "An' what for?" He had no words to spare that morning; he was bent on deeds.

"I want yo' to help me to secure George Caffer, Phil Lambert. George hez made up his mind to turn teetotal, an' if I can get you to give your owd crony a lift i' t' right direction, yo' can do for him what nobody else can. What Caffer needs is not so much good resolution as backbone. If you'll say no for h.m, he'll say it for hissself."

"All right," said Phil, "Ah can say no for both on us." And he did!

Before taking his usual mid-morning walk to see his sweetheart, Aaron went home to Lily Lodge to make his observations there. Caffer had made a start, and the scouring and cleaning process had begun. The painter was enjoying a cup of coffee, prepared for him by the hands of Esther Harland, and his face was more calm and tranquil than it had been for many a day.

Caffer gave the old man a comforting assurance that he was "all right ; an' meant to keep so ;" and when he was told of Lambert's quarrel with Landlord Stubbs, he expressed his strong intention to "keep the two away from each other." "No more 'Black Swan' for me and Phil, Aaron," said Caffer. "I'll see to that."

In this way the charm was working. As the old man passed the barber's shop, on his way to Kitty's, Phil was in his shirt-sleeves, busily cleaning the bow-windows, a process which brought out the shopkeepers of the market-place to exchange nods and looks and whispers of surprise. Just three words did the barber say as he suspended operations while Aaron passed, but that was all the good old man cared to hear.

"Niver nae mair !" said he ; and Aaron bounded by the little parlour window like a school-boy, and thought of Susie, and the brighter page in her sad life history begun that day.

Lawyer Everett was crossing the street to that cobwebby den of his he called his office.

"Morning, Aaron," said he, accosting the old man. "You look absurdly happy this morning. One would think that it was you who had been married to-day. What's up?"

"Married? Nay ; but I've been meddlin' in a couple o' cases o' divorce," said Aaron, with quite a ripple of pleasant laughter, "an' that's something mair i' your line, isn't it, Lawyer Everett?"

"What do you mean?" said the solicitor, who possibly thought a client was in sight, "who's tired of bondage now?"

"Why, George Caffer an' Phil Lambert hev said good-bye to the 'Black Swan,' an' I've been witness to the deed o' separation. If yo' can get me a job o' t' same sort, *at t'* 'Griffin Inn,' yo' can mak' me happier still, an' for auld acquaintance sake, I'll do it for nowt."

From all this it will be seen that the old patriarch was quite a man of war that morning, that the smell of battle was on him, and that he was ready to do exploits!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

I THINK it likely enough that during his long life Aaron Brigham had never walked the streets of Netherborough with a lighter heart than on that crisp and golden autumn morning, when his steps were directed to the reformed and happy home of his "lahtle lassie;" when Painter Caffer and Barber Lambert had become the captives of his good sword, and while yet the chimes of Walter Bardsley's wedding-bells were making music in his ear.

There was quite a wealth of tenderness in the old man's tone as he accosted his little sweetheart. It seemed to him as though his soul had received an access of loving-kindness and goodwill to all and sundry, and as if he must go forth on an extended mission as the knight-errant of Christ Jesus. That kind of thing grows by what it feeds on, and the grand old saint dearly felt like getting half Netherborough in his beneficent embrace.

"Good mornin'," Kitty, said the old man, lifting the little lady into his arms that he might hug her as a lover should. "Then you ain't been to the weddin' this mornin'. I should ha' thowt yo' couldn't ha' kept away. They say all women like a weddin', an' that means lahtle women as well as grown un's." The old man laughed heartily at his own humour, and Kitty archly replied:—

"No, *I* ain't been, gran'feyther, but *you* hev, ain't yo'? Why, you look as happy as as if you'd gone an' been an' gotten married yourself," said the merry little maiden. Still she kissed him as though she had a right to him for all that.

"What, *me*, my little sweetheart? Me go an' marry



onybody but my lahtle lassie, an' be happy? Come, come Kitty, you can't think that! Hoo can yo' be sae cruel? Look you here, Miss Catherine Smart, I'd better tek' up my hat an'—"

"Hush, this minnit!" Then two little hands were closely pressed on the old man's mouth, and then two little lips were glued thereto instead; the dreadful injustice was condoned, and the course of true love did run smooth again.

"Ah let the chilther go te see t' weddin'," explained Kitty. "Ah thowt it wad please 'em; an feyther tore his jersey yesterday, so Ah got a bit o' quiet tahme te mend it. But," continued she, viewing the torn garment with a discontented eye as she held it in her hands, "Ah dizn't get on with it; it's o'kard soort o' stuff te sew, yo' see."

"Hey, that it is," said the sympathetic Aaron, eyeing Kitty's bungling attempt at repairs; "but I'll tell yo' what, little woman, you've done your best, an' angels can dae nae mair then that. Just lap it up fo' me in a bit o' paper, an' I'll tek' it to Esther Harland. She'll put it to rights in a jiffey."

Aaron was more than repaid by the grateful smile that lightened up the child's anxious face. Once again the long, white, silken hair was streaming in the breeze, as the devoted lover sped along the street on an errand of help and comfort for a little child—"one of these little ones"—of whom the Christ takes special note, and for whose sake the benedictions fall. Aaron's heart was attuned to the chiming of the bells, and the golden sunshine was over all.

Alas, alas, a bolt fell out of the blue; thunder boomed from a clear sky, and on the happy servant of his kind, a great, great sorrow fell. Later in the day he was again met by Lawyer Everett. He had just brought his purple features out of the doorway of the "Griffin," with an additional glow upon them, in honour, he said, of the wedding

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"WHAT DO YO' MEAN, EVERETT?" SAID THE OLD MAN.

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day. He greeted Aaron Brigham with a coarse and triumphant chuckle. The time had come for a tremendous retort to the old man's hint about the "Griffin."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed he. "What do you think of your pattern young man now? His young wife's got him into leading strings at once, like a sensible woman, and Walter Bardsley's teetotal fad is a burst bubble!"

"What do yo' mean, Evcrett?" said the old man. His heart beat fast, and he felt sick and faint.

"Mean? Why I mean that the wise and wilful Walter has pledged his father-in-law in champagne; has left the ranks of the cold water lunatics and showed himself a man! Hasn't he, Dick?"

This question was addressed to Dick Bardsley, who had followed him out of the "Griffin," and who still wore the wedding favour pinned upon his coat.

"Hey, marry, Alice has done the trick for him. I hope to see him jolly well drunk within a month of Sundays. He's got the Bardsley drought on him; and I shall never be pestered with his confounded advice. If he ever saw me enjoying my glass, he always looked sour enough to curdle new milk. I shall get my liquor in comfort now, and have a new comrade to go on the booze with. Come in, Aaron, you can't do better than follow a good example. It's a poor heart that never rejoices. I'll stand treat—"

But Aaron Brigham had silently departed. The sunshine had darkened out of his sky; the warmth that had glowed so pleasantly round his heart, had given place to a chill, numb heaviness, and the long deep-drawn sighs that rose from his heaving breast, told the wordless story of the exceeding bitter sorrow of his soul.

How he found his way to Lily Lodge he knew not. As he crossed the threshold of its trellised porch, his wan, white face, so ghostly and so sad, elicited a scream from Esther

Harland, who thought her master stricken, and feared the worst.

"Why, Aaron!" she said, touched to the quick at the sight of his great grief. "Whatever is the matter wi' yo'?"

She was only just in time to guide his swerving footsteps to the old arm-chair in the chimney corner. With a groan that made the good housekeeper's flesh creep, the old man placed his two arms upon the little table, laid his head thereon, and abandoned himself to a very tremour and passion of tears.

Tears do not come readily to the eyes of the old, and there are few sights more distressing than the heart-break of bending age weeping out its agony, with no words to tell the tale. O, if Walter Bardsley could only have seen that sight; if only that poor, foolish bride, Alice, could have looked on that strange vision; surely, if even Mr. Norwood Hayes had taken in that harrowing scene, the young man's reckless plunge, so lightly made, and so glibly applauded, might have aroused a terror of apprehension, alarm, and strong remorse.

For awhile, Esther Harland could but look on in silence, dropping companion tears, and laying her hand gently on his good, grey head. Then the customary self-command came back to him.

"Esther, my lass, I'se better now," he said, "But I feel as though I've a'most had my death-blow! Walter Bardsley's brokken his pledge on his weddin' day. The 'Bardsley drought' 'll rush 'im to his grave at a gallop, an' that sweet Alice hez bargained for a blighted life, an' a brokken heart!"

"Nay, nay, owd friend. You mawn't prophecy sae bad as that," said Esther. "It's mebbe nobbut a sudden slip. Ah dare say he'll sign again, noo that he's married. You'll ha' te pray for him."

"Pray for him!" said Aaron, bringing down his clenched hand on the table, "Ah could gi' my poor aud life for the

lad. Poor, poor Walter! Would God I had died for thee!"

He rose to his feet, walked unassisted to his bedroom, closed the door behind him, locked it promptly, and Esther Harland knew, by that well-known token, that he had gone to talk with God; had gone to struggle, like the wrestler by the brook Jabbok, for the life and soul of Walter Bardsley! When he came forth from the place he was as one transfigured, and the much-relieved Esther knew that his grief was restrained, that his hope was kindled, and that his soul was strong.

Then a strange thing happened. George Caffer had come in to get his supper after the labours of the day, and Phil Lambert had turned in of set purpose to speak a cheery word to his comrade, and to report himself to Aaron with a repetition of that "Niver nae mair," which had made music that morning in the old man's ears. And even while yet the pleasant little interview was being held, Tom Smart and dear little maid Kitty, came along to fetch the mended jersey, and save gran'feyther an evening walk. Tom's answer to Aaron's inquiry as to his welfare, was a calm, contented, re-assuring smile; and as the old man noted how much little Kitty's face and fortune had improved since "feyther turned teetotal," a great wave of thankfulness swept over the old man's soul. Caffer, and Lambert, and Smart, and Kitty—the good Lord had gathered them round to cheer and comfort him; and Walter Bardsley, by the help of God, should become, despite the old man's fear, the prey, for Christ's sake, of his bow and his spear!

Heart up, old warrior! The conflict will be long, will be disheartening, but the good old Jacob who can wrestle, has power with God, and will prevail!

## CHAPTER XXX.

**W**HILE Aaron Brigham was letting fall hot tears for Walter Bardsley's sore betrayal of his trust, the young bridegroom was speeding along by special coach to Scarborough with his fair bride beside him. But how utterly the gladsomeness of that journey has been discounted! He is trying, like a man, like a lover, like a husband, to make the time pass blithely and delightfully for the maiden he so longs to love and cherish. He has been a perfect Samson in his capacity for making others happy. He has ever been the joy of every holiday, the soul of every pleasure-party, and the spring of every social delight, but, Samson though he is, he fails utterly now. His locks are shorn.

Poor Walter! He keeps starting up out of long spells of silence, and forces himself to be gay. He sings short staves of a wedding song, fills his vision with the fair features of his bride, his own, his beloved one, and enfolds her in his heart. Then suddenly his face turns white and his soul is sick within him. Conscience flings him on the rack, his manhood turns round upon him and whispers, "Coward!"

Then his thoughts fly for ease and refuge to his father-in-law, the soul of Christian honour, the knight without reproach, and hungrily looks for all the advantages that must come of being his son, his comrade, his confidant, and friend. Yet he is chagrined, vexed, worried to find how little all that comes to as a set-off against the damning fact that he has broken a life-long pledge, has dishonoured himself, has shamed the few and faithful Abdiels, temperance

Abdiels, who held their own against the contempt and laughter of the crowd, and has grieved the Christ who had received his vow.

No wonder that Jennie Bardsley, left behind in Netherborough, thinks of her brother, her bridegroom brother, with sorrow and distress: that she feels sick at heart for Walter's sake, wears cheeks that are ghost-like at a wedding-feast, and steals away in the moonlight to kneel by the grave of her slaughtered lover, the handsome Reuben Stanford. "O, Walter, Walter," she groaned, "would God you had never been born!"

But it may be asked, why did not Walter Bardsley hasten to set himself right at once? As soon as the iron of remorse and the goad of conviction had entered his soul, why did he not retrace his steps and take his pledge anew? Ay, why indeed?

The questioner shows but little knowledge of the forces that were arrayed against any such a line of action. How could he so soon discount the "for my sake" that came from the loving lips of his trustful wife? What could he say to his estimable father-in-law, who had publicly congratulated him on joining the noble ranks of those whose "real temperance" did not need the crutches of a pledge to keep it up? What could he say to the church with whom he worshipped, who never had any sympathy with his "teetotal fad," and who would congratulate him on being a "better fellow than ever?"

No, no, no, from the beginning until now it has been far easier to break than to re-unite again: and Walter Bardsley was content to nurse the "good intention" to be an abstainer again "sometime"—that treacherous, and delusive *no time* which tolls from the belfry of Nevermore!

Walter Bardsley had been laid flat on his back in a sudden scuffle with Apollyon, and his sword had flown out of his hand. Will he ever grasp the hilt again? Will



he ever more stand upright upon his feet? Of one thing you may be sure: that the Christian church with which he is allied, "*not being in favour of extremes*," will not hasten to lend him a helping hand. If Walter Bardsley remains a moderate drinker, the church at Zion would condemn his taking the pledge again; and if "things should grow serious," and the hereditary drink appetite should overthrow him, then the help of "Zion" will perhaps be proffered—and perhaps not,—and all these "king's men" cannot set the fallen one up again! "Poor fellow: it's all over with him!" That is the way the devil assists Zion to play the fool—that is how he paralyses her strong right hand. Walter Bardsley, now that he has become an erring weakling, is distinctly less likely to recover his footing because he is a member of a Christian church. The best thing he can do in order to spring back to his manly position on the drink question—the best for himself and for others—is to give the Church the go-by, and ask only of the Christ. 'Tis true, 'tis pity; pity 'tis, 'tis true!

Mr. Allamore, the contractor, true social reformer that he was, was bitterly grieved and disappointed at the loss of his "right hand man." Of course, the news of Walter Bardsley's sudden declension from the temperance platform, spread through Netherborough in a very short space of time. The various landlords of the liquor shops saw gifts and graces in him that they had never discerned in him before; the usual *habitués* of the bar-rooms, tap-rooms, and "parlours" had many an extra glass in honour of so notable an accession from the slender ranks of Netherborough abstainers.

It was well for George Caffer and Phil Lambert that Aaron Brigham had laid his hand on the two roystering boon companions on the very morning of the young man's wedding day. It was well for them, that both men held

fast their vow ; the painter faithfully toiling at Lily Lodge, the barber true to his motto, "Never nae mair."

Most assuredly, the two toppers would else have found prompt and sufficient reason for going "on the spree," and for taking a full week to do it in. The former would have allowed his paints to dry up in their pots, and his brushes to stiffen on their shelves, and would have left his last job of work half done, [the latter would have laid by his razor and his lather brush, and compelled Her Majesty's lieges to wear a rough and stubbly beard well-nigh a fortnight old, before his hand was again in trim to use his perilous tool in safety.

The rejoicing was general. Walter had come boldly over from the ranks of milk-sops and water-babies ; had joined the ranks of the free and independents, like Dr. Medway, of the port wine visage, Lawyer Everett, of the purple features, Ned Oxtoby the drunken blacksmith, and "gen'lemen, Chrish'un gen'l'men, like Mish'r Nor'od Hayes."

Probably there was no one in all Netherborough who was more delighted over Walter's change of front than his own brother, his elder brother, Richard. To him it was a matter of downright triumph and satisfaction. How strange this was ! How shockingly strange ! Dick Bardsley's father had perished miserably, with constitution wrecked and shattered, and with his once strong, active mind reduced to helpless vacuity while yet the years of middle life were barely reached, and certainly not nearly passed.

He was not what is conventionally called a drunkard. He did not roll about the streets ; never was so overcome with liquor as to be unable to walk along the High Street ; but he drank strong waters—rum, mainly, I believe—drank steadily and constantly. He gradually increased in the quantity of the dose, gradually increased in times and

seasons, until, strange to say, he seemed to live mainly on the thing that was killing him.

At last he succumbed because there was more rum than corpuscles in his vitiated blood. The brain matter in his skull had so decayed that reason ebbed away long months before his death. I know where his grave is, and I know how scared I felt when, as an impressionable lad, with some sensitiveness of conscience, and moral training, I read the words, the lying words, that a hypocritical conventional Christianity thought it decent to put upon his gravestone in the Netherborough churchyard—

“ To take him hence God thought it best ;  
We humbly bow to His behest.”

The shameless cant of it was awful to me. “ God thought it best :” and yet he deliberately destroyed himself ! He called to the grave of his own accord, and struggled through the mire of low sensuality to get there. And this was “ His behest !” If he had taken prussic acid, the moral sense of the community would have been so shocked as to demand the erasure of the blasphemy ; but he only took rum, so Christian consistency was content to hold its breath a moment, and let the awful libel on Almighty goodness and wisdom pass.

Such was the end of Harvey Bardsley ; and yet his eldest son finds subject of rejoicing in the fact that the youngest on has suddenly broken the vow of a lifetime ; has entered on the perilous course which may lead him to the dreadful goal his father reached—a goal of shame and death ! How can such rejoicing be accounted for ?

In this way. Richard himself was far on the way his erring father trod. He was himself within the folds of the constrictor that had hugged him to his death, and his brother Walter’s total abstinence was a daily condemnation

and rebuke. Now, however, Walter's condemnation counts for nothing: he can drink as well as other people, and Richard finds in him no longer a tacit check on his road to ruin, but an excuse for boldly travelling thereon.

"Walter is everybody's favourite. Walter is one of the longest-headed fellows in Netherborough. Walter takes his glass, so why mayn't I?"

This is the way that Dick Bardsley argued, and this is the way many argue to their own hurt and damage to this day. I do not hesitate to say that this plausible sort of argument in the family, in society, in comradeship, in Church fellowship, is tremendously prevalent, and is productive of terrible results.

One night sweet Jennie Bardsley felt impelled to speak to Dick, in sisterly love and candour, on his besetting sin. He was, as usual, the worse for drink.

"O Dick, Dick!" said she, in wailing tones of pitiful entreaty, "How can you, how dare you sin so foully against yourself, so wickedly against God?"

"O bother?" was the characteristic reply. "One can't always put the stopper on at the right moment. It's a poor heart that never rejoices, and if one does happen to draw bridle a little over late, still I don't want to be any wiser or better than Walter, or Mr. Dunwell, or Norwood Hayes."

That was her brother Dick's reply; and that reply is either said or thought by thousands who are confirmed in their self-indulgence, and grooved more fixedly on ruin by the example of men and women who are held to be better than themselves.

Father, what about your son? Friend, what about your comrade? Minister, what about the many who look up to you? The sheep who hear and note and follow? If that be the influence *you* are having on any one in your cure of

souls, I say it solemnly, it would be better that you should die ! You will be asked about Abel, your brother ; and if there is blood upon your garment, you must bear the brand upon your brow. " Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God of my salvation."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

AND so it came to pass, as I have said, that Richard Bardsley was exultant, and he and half-a-dozen boon companions hatched an evil plot in the malignant lightness of their hearts.

Mr. Allamore had spoken in strong condemnation and deep regret of Walter Bardsley's act of "treason" as he called it, to the cause of true philanthropy. Dick Bardsley heard of it, and declared with a curse that he would be revenged on the "snivelling canter" for what he had said.

He suggested to a handful of his comrades, in the parlour of the "Griffin," that they should join to "stand treat" to the navvies of Netherborough ; giving them plentiful rounds of beer to drink the health of Walter Bardsley and his bride. The invitation was given to the men as they came out of the contractor's Sunday meeting held in the plank building, by sending messages to the various "gangers," and in every other way that was likely to insure a general response.

A little way out of Netherborough, and near the works of the new railway, there was a low beer-shop called "The Navvies' Delight."

A special license had been applied for, "for the convenience of the men," and two or three squires, and one or two brewers, and one or two clergymen, acting as Justices of the *Peace*, did hereby initiate a course of disorder, quarrel, and open vice to which Netherborough, bad as it was, had hitherto been a stranger. After church hours—O, the piety of the liquor laws !—the Sunday evenings were now

doubly desecrated by the drunken revels that shamed the Sabbath in and around "The Navvies' Delight."

One Sunday evening a rowdy gang of navvies, supplied with strong ale by Dick Bardsley and his confederates, reeled out from "The Navvies' Delight," and met the congregation which was just leaving the service at the Mission-room. The retiring worshippers were greeted with shouts of laughter and insulting jeers. Some of them, not remarkable for their self-control, were not slow in making reprisals. Stones were thrown, blows were given; hooting and hustling fanned the fury of the fray, and led to a riot of menacing dimensions.

In vain did Mr. Allamore and his colleagues strive to allay the storm. He was fain to drag Jennie Bardsley out of the throng. The passions of the drink-excited navvies became murderous; and one gigantic fellow, named Asplin, distinguished himself by his reckless brutality. He had had a quarrel with a young carpenter, a quarrel of old standing; and he seemed to pick him out for special fight. The big barrow-man, half crazed with beer, had knocked down and brutally kicked a lad who crossed his way. The young carpenter, roused to indignant fury, struck the fellow a stinging blow in the face. In another moment the navvy dashed forward with an awful oath; the flash of a long knife-blade was seen in the twilight, a cry and a groan overtopped all sounds, a quivering human frame lay face upward on the highway, and the soil around was red with blood!

"Murder!" The cry was a shriek, keen and dreadful. It would not die out, it held on, an undying echo, and made the twilight tremble. It arose from the lips of the young wife, now the stricken widow, of the murdered man. They had sat together at the mission-service, had sung together the praises of the Lord of the Sabbath. They were together now, he, stark dead upon the ground, with his

white face turned up to the darkening heavens ; she, lying heart-broken across his body, with no words upon her wan, white lips. How do I know this? I saw the stare of the dead man as he was carried home. I was young then : I can see it now.

The drunken navvy, Richard Asplin, who had done his comrade to death by the knife, was arrested, and in due time was taken before the magistrates—the magistrates to whom Netherborough was indebted for that ennobling and beneficent institution, “The Navvies’ Delight !” The Clergyman, J.P., the Brewer, J.P., the Squire, J.P., who had shares in the brewery, committed the manslayer to York Castle for trial at the next assizes, and each one of them used some strong language, for the behoof of the general public, on the “Growing use of the knife,” and said no single word against the use of the drink that made the owner of the knife a murderer !

The coroner’s inquest was held, of course, at the “Netherborough Arms,” for alike the fount and stream of British law and justice, so far as crime is concerned, smells of alcohol all the way and all the time ; and Mr. Richard Bardsley, that “citizen of credit and renown,” was foreman of the jury, surely a fitting leader of the twelve good men and true !

Such evidence was adduced of malice, in the shape of previous threats, and at least one assault, that the jury brought in a verdict of wilful murder, and for that crime, and more, perhaps, because of the common “use of the knife” that disgraced that period, Richard Asplin was tried for his life, found guilty, and sentenced to death.

There are those living to-day, I dare say, who heard the learned judge’s summing-up, and who remember with what power and pathos his lordship spoke of the ruinous consequences of alcoholic indulgence.

“If it were not for this fell destroyer,” he said, “this foe



to life and morals, this enemy to health and thrift and order, this all-inclusive maker of crime, *our* vocation would be gone, and pauperism, crime, madness, and misery would largely vanish from the land."

My lords, the judges, have been favouring us periodically for many years with official deliverances of this kind. They have been diligently copied into the various temperance organs. Even the principal newspapers, whose protection and advocacy of the sacred rights of the liquor traffic is one of their most astounding methods of "promoting and conserving public morality," have repeated and sermonised on these judicial gems of wisdom and truth!

But what of the judges themselves? Have their lordships drunk one jorum of punch the less? Have they consumed one magnum of port or of champagne less at the assize dinner, after they have condemned a drunkard to the hangman's noose, and preached their pious homily against the ruinous results of strong drink? Which of them all has become a leader in the patriotic fight against the drink-devil? Which of them are even in the rank and file of the "leagued foes of Britain's direst curse?" Have any of the judges believed on Him who denied Himself even unto death to lessen human misery, and minimise human sin?

My lords and Mr. Justices! A plain word in your ears, if you please. You had surely better restrain your virtuous indignation, and cut short your hypocritical diatribes against Drink, or stop your personal patronage of the fiend of the vat and still, or you must be content to hear the contemptuous comment which Goldsmith has made classical—Fudge!

In those days, the scaffold was openly reared in sight of all the people, for the education of a beery and brutal mob. On the morning of the execution, poor Asplin, apparently penitent, and certainly sober, made a little speech, after the custom of the times, and hoped "that all you good people

will take warning of my misfortune, and give up the drink that has brought me here."

You see his testimony was much the same in meaning as that of my lord the judge, and was probably of equal or a little superior value. In all likelihood if Richard Asplin could have been reprieved from the scaffold he would have repaired, as soon as convenient, to the "Navvies' Delight," or to some other beer-shop, to celebrate his escape in the fashion provided and protected by British law!

That, of course, could not be. Those in authority had far too much virtuous regard for the lives of honest citizens, so they swung the life out of him, broke the neck of him, and buried him in ground accursed within the precincts of the gaol. Then when "justice" had been done, they were content to let the demon who had prompted him to murder, run amuck through all the land, licensed to breed and train a succession of Richard Asplins to keep the gallows busy, and the gaols supplied.

It may seem to the reader that the episode of Richard Asplin has but little to do with the story, but let them remember that the story *as* a story is a secondary matter, and to fight England's curse with facts is my first. Let them remember also that Walter Bardsley's ill-starred lapse on his wedding-day was answerable for his brother Dick's resolve to "stand treat" to the navvies, and to be even with Mr. Allamore. The diversified action and results of alcohol are infinitely numerous, but the trail of the serpent is over them all, and much of it is blood-red! Very!

## CHAPTER XXXII.

THERE was great rejoicing in the cottage of Tom Smart. That reformed drunkard had now held on his way on the lines of self-control so long and steadily that those who "had hopes of him" were getting quite sanguine, and even those who shook their wise heads the most, and most persistently prophesied the worst, were beginning to be silenced. The ever kind and genial Mr. Norwood Hayes was greatly interested in Tom's case, and his inquiries concerning him were both numerous and sympathetic.

"Well, Aaron," he asked one evening, as the old man was bound for Tom's poor, but vastly improved home, "how's your *protege*, Tom Smart, getting on?"

"Why, wonderfully weel, I think. I reckon it's the hardest battle that he's iver had to fight, and the way he's winnin' it and howding his own is capital, fair capital; that's what it is. As you say, he's a prodigy, for iverybody's surprised at him."

It will be seen that Aaron Brigham, being illiterately learned, did not fully appreciate the French word which Mr. Hayes had introduced into his inquiry. I should not have put it in myself, if he had not done so. I have small sympathy with the too numerous story-tellers of our day who find honest English insufficient for them. Mr. Hayes smiled good-humouredly, and accepted Aaron's interpretation.

"Well," he said, "I'm sure we're all immensely glad for himself, and deeply grateful to God for the change that has come to him. I *do* hope it will continue."

"I think it will," said the old man. "There's a few on us that's prayin' for him, an', as far as we can, that's givin' t' poor fellow a helpin' hand."

"Yes, I'm praying for him, too," said Mr. Hayes, not at all willing to be left out of the "few" who were Tom's active friends. "But how about giving him a helping hand? It is he for himself in this case, you know. You can't abstain *for* him, can you?"

"O yes, you can," said Aaron, with an emphatic nod. "'I won't drink while you don't drink,'" said Aaron, "'for love's sake,' hez kept two folks sober for a life-tahme, an' thoosands o' poor weak brothers is findin' t' strength in it ivery day!"

"There's limits to oor ability to help 'em, nae doot," the old man continued; "but, as I've said, we can go withoot drink ourselves, an' we can give 'em a cheerin' word. It's nae use sayin' 'Don't thoo drink, Tom Smart: it's at thee peril if thoo does. I takes a little drop myself, an' I knoa that its varry good and pleasant, but thoo musn't touch it.' Mr. Hayes, I should be doonright 'sham'd o' myself to talk like that. Tom's likely to do as I do when he won't do what I say, an' so doin' and sayin' shall keep company. When t' followers o' Christ follow that plan, I think they'll follow Him 'fully,' as the Bible says. As it is," said Aaron, looking the deacon squarely in the face, "a good mony of 'em isn't within sight of Him, an' I doot He won't knoa 'em when they want to scrape closer acquaintance with Him an' find t' door shut."

Here, for more reasons than one, the conversation ended.

Yes, there was rejoicing in the cottage of Tom Smart. By dint of strict economy and close hoarding of Tom's wages, Kitty had been able to put "the chilther" into trim, not in bits and remnants, but in new material from head to heel; and to-morrow being Sunday, they were to wear the

new hats and boots that had hitherto been an impossible purchase. Besides this, Tom himself was to **don a new Sunday** suit. It had just come in from the tailor's, and Kitty was in the act of untying the precious parcel when her father came in from work, tired enough, for his toil was hard. But, tired as he was, there was light in his eye, and even an exultant look upon his face.

He was accompanied by that true friend of the family, Aaron Brigham, who had overtaken him after leaving Mr. Norwood Hayes with a thing or two to think about.

"Cum wi' me," Tom said. "Ah reckon you was comin' if t' truth was knoan." Here he lifted up a neatly tied parcel which he held in his hand, as if to excite the old man's curiosity, and prompt a leading question.

"What's tha' gotten there, Tom?" said Aaron, as they walked homeward.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tom, as he shook his head, which evidently had something in it, "'Tellin's knowin,' owd friend. It's summat for Kitty, sae you mun ax her yerself when we get whooam."

The two men found the cottage clean and tidy, though there was quite a Saturday night air about it, as though things were being got ready for the Sabbath's pause and peace.

"Hellow, feyther! What ha' yo' gotten there?" asked Kitty, as she turned to give him her customary kiss. That, by the way, was an institution that dated back from the signing of the Temperance pledge.

"Why, how sud Ah knoa, Kitty," said Tom, with quite an odd little laugh, as he put the parcel carefully down on a chair. "It's gotten yoor neeam on it, soe thoo can finnd it oot for theesen."

By this time the three "chilther" were gathered round the chair, stretching curious fingers towards the unwonted sight, and the face of gran'feyther, evincing much curiosity,

was bending over them. Tom had subsided into his arm-chair, and began to unlace his big, heavy boots, quite unconcernedly, as though the matter was no business of his.

Kitty paused a moment, uncertain as to whether she was to finish the unwrapping of the parcel she was at, or whether she should turn aside and explore the new mystery which had come to hand, and which had her name on it

"Let's see what's in it," said little Tommy, a very small, but amusingly perfect, copy of T. S., senior, and that decided her.

In a few moments she found that the parcel contained two lesser parcels. In one of these was a pair of boots; a nice pair of strong useful boots, but neat and dapper, mind you, as if the purchaser had had Sunday wear in his eye when he bought them.

"O my!" said Polly, the small lieutenant before referred to. "Kitty's gotten a pair o' boots just like we hev, only nicer. *I is* glad."

Polly didn't know much about grammar, but her sisterly joy was quite independent of all that sort of thing, and there was the ring of real pleasure in every word. The fact that boots had already come for all but Kitty had been quite a thorn in her sisterly side, and had taken half the glamour of her own new boots away.

By and-by all of Tom Smart's admiring children gave voice together, and so did gran'feyther, and so did Kitty; only Tom kept silent, bending over his boots, but with a peep from his watchful eyes!

"My word, but that *is* nice!"

It was. There was a unanimous consensus of opinion on that subject. It was a pretty little hat, trimmed with dark red ribbons and gimp to match. Nothing must do but she must put it on. Then nothing must do but there must be kisses all round, and Polly sidled up at once to begin the

operation. But Kitty, speechless with pleasure, glanced at feyther, and read his secret on his face. She put Polly gently aside, lifted her father's face with a hand on either cheek. She drew it under the shadow of the new hat, and kissed him again and again and again. So Tom Smart was rewarded for his dainty, delicate, loving little act of thoughtfulness, and was beyond measure glad.

Of course, Polly's privilege came next, and chubby Tommy's, and the little one, whose name I am not quite clear about. I need not say that the white-haired lover took the opportunity to get his wee lover in his arms, and I am afraid he took a most unconscionable toll. But they do say, you know, "that all's fair in love and war," and if ever mortal man was in love just then, it was Aaron Brigham, and the shadow of that bewitching little hat and the still more bewitching face beneath it, might well make Aaron Brigham make the most of his opportunity.

"God bless tha', my lahtle lassie, God bless tha', an' God bless thy feyther an' all!" said he; then turning to Tom Smart, "Tom, my lad, it was a grand day when thoo put thy pen to paper, an' put sitch sunshine into Kitty's life!"

Now, the next day was Communion Sunday, and for the first time as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, Tom Smart was to join those whom He had called into His family to "do in remembrance" that which should "show forth the Lord's death until he come," to engage in that solemn service which every true-hearted Christian believer ought surely to regard as the highest and holiest of all the privileges of the Christian Church.

"Hail, sacred feast which Jesus makes,  
Rich banquet of His flesh and blood!  
Thrice happy he who here partakes  
That sacred stream, that heavenly food."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE Sabbath dawned bright and fair and beautiful, one of those mellow and balmy mornings which give a golden aspect to the slowly-fading year. All the members of the Smart family were up and about full early that morning, for they were determined to be "at chapel" in good time. Modest and thoughtful Kitty was especially anxious that they should not have to carry their new hats into their customary seat after the congregation had all assembled; for most certainly she was not one of that too numerous host of so-called "worshippers" whose principal errand to church is to see, and especially to be seen.

Perhaps she had half a fear that the strange circumstance that they had hats at all might call forth curious observation. Suffice it to say that they were in their places beforehand, and received a smiling welcome and a kindly nod of recognition from Kitty's teacher, Jennie Bardsley, who sat in a pew just within the chapel, while they, of course, were sitting in the seats provided for the poor—the "Free Seats" as they are called, where those sit who have but thin purses, or who carry no pouch at all. The time will come soon, let us hope, when this scandalous cultivation and maintenance of the *caste* abomination will cease to discredit and disgrace the houses built for God.

In the vestry of "Zion Chapel" that morning, there was a little extra bustle going on. It was Communion Sunday, and special preparation had to be made. The brightly burnished silver flagon had to be filled with port wine, and a second bottle had to be uncorked to provide for a possible



extra attendance on account of the splendid morning. Strange, is it not, that a mere change of weather can thin the attendance of loyal lovers of the Christ at the Royal board at which He sits dispensing the feast of love? I think He is less grieved in spirit by the open enmity or declared indifference of strangers, than by this base desertion of his patronising and frigid friends! The fragrance and aroma of the port wine, the *bouquet*, as Mr. Norwood Hayes called it, pervaded the little room. Not a deacon, nor an official of any sort entered it without sniffing and smelling, as who should say, "Not much adulteration about that, I reckon." Mr. Fenton, the superintendent, said, as he had said a good dozen times before,

"It's a famous advantage to our sick poor, Mr. Hayes, that you have the charge of the wine supply. It must be a real God-send to them to have such wine supplied to them in their need. I should not care for the responsibility myself. There's so much stuff in the market palmed off as wine which is positively deleterious—poison in fact, if the truth was known."

"You're right, Mr. Fenton," said Mr. Lyno, a brother deacon, whose ability to speak on the subject was experimentally won, "and it's not only the sick poor that finds the advantage of it, but it's everybody that sips it as the cup goes round. I often wonder that some folks I know don't take an extra gulp, seeing their taste lies a little that way; and, indeed, I expect they do, for the monthly supply has hard work to hold out sometimes. I was going to say, 'Small blame to them,' with such wine as that to tempt them."

"Well," said Mr. Norwood Hayes, a little loftily, for he enjoyed the compliment and felt its truthfulness, "I have always said that sacramental wine is devoted to the highest, holiest, and most honourable use to which the juice of the grape can be put in all the world; and, therefore, that it

should always be of the best brand, and very highest quality that intelligence can select, or that money can procure. Of course, such wine is quite beyond the reach of a rural church with an exchequer such as ours. For that reason I am only too glad to make this matter my own special charge, to buy the wine when I stock my own cellar, and to present it as a personal thankoffering to Him in whose loving service it is to be employed."

Of course "the brethren" felt that this was a kindly and thoughtful act on the part of Mr. Hayes, and so far as object and motive were concerned, so right heartily do I.

Mr. Dunwell, the pastor, was in excellent trim that morning, and had prepared an admirable sermon as an introduction to the still more profitable service that was to follow. Its "delivery," as the good folks called it, was, as usual, some said even more than usual, effective and impressive. He put, as his habit was, the truth, the real truth, before his people in such a fashion as to win the judgment and touch of the heart. Speaking directly to those who were about to gather around the Lord's Table, he preached from those tender memorial words of John concerning Jesus, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John xiii. 1.)

I can only quote briefly. "You are kept in the world for a high and noble purpose. The world holds Christ in dishonour, and gives His glory to another. True religion is disparaged, Christ's honour is assailed, and His name is discredited, even in the house of His friends. The Saviour was His own answer to His traducers while He lived on earth. 'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?' He said, and silence was the only possible reply. Christ is now ascended into heaven. He has given His spotless fame, His beautiful character, His high pretensions, in the keeping of His Church and people. You are in the world to represent Jesus! You bear his name. You wear His

robes. You reflect His image. Your holy duty is to bear that name without dishonour, to wear that robe without a stain, and to see to it that the image you reflect is not distorted, but a perfect likeness of the Man you love and serve. When Jesus prayed to the Father for His disciples, He said, 'The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them, *that the world may know* that Thou hast sent Me.'

After dealing in this way with the solemn responsibilities of the Christian as the representatives of the Pattern Man, the pastor proceeded to impress his hearers with a deeper sense of their duty to their neighbours "in the world." They were not to live to themselves alone. They were to delight in the helping, uplifting, saving, guarding others—especially the tempted and fallen, "*the weak and those who were easily overthrown.*"

"You are to labour," he said, "for the world's well-being, and especially for the good of those who lie prone and pitiful at your own door. 'Go work,' said the Master, *your* Master, mind you, 'and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of God is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely ye have received, freely give.'

'Such our whole employment be,  
Works of faith and charity;  
Works of love on man bestowed,  
Secret intercourse with God.'

Then Mr. Dunwell addressed himself to speak of the "love to the end," which is ensured to the faithful soldier of the Cross. In this strain, for I must quote no more, the worthy pastor continued for a little more than the regulation forty minutes, for, indeed, and of a truth, he was stirred in his own soul.

There was no doubt that the fact that Tom Smart was "sitting clothed and in his right mind," and was about to

sit down with them at the Lord's table, had great influence on him, as indeed it would on any rightly-constituted mind. Everybody felt that the service was a most gracious and elevating time.

Tom Smart sat, melted and humble, wondering whether he should ever be able to live like Jesus. His heart warmed and his blood tingled through his veins as he thought that he might be able to save some poor sinner, as Kitty and Aaron Brigham and Jesus had saved him.

During the brief interval which followed the ordinary morning service, Kitty took the "chilther" home, passing out of the lobby of the chapel with quite a little bit of childish pride in the fact that "feyther" was counted worthy to stay behind with the faithful few. And well she might, for all that the change it represented meant to her and her little household could scarcely be calculated by figures, or described by words.

It will not be wondered at that Tom Smart felt a good deal of trepidation at the venture he was about to make. I do not envy the state of mind of either man or woman who can thus commune for the first time with the Bread of Life without being awed and melted at the prospect of a privilege so high. The thought of tasting alcohol in such an attractive form had not presented itself to him as being a daring and unwise experiment. I wish it had ; but he felt himself unworthy—oh, how utterly unworthy!—of this great honour, to be the guest of Christ.

"Splendid sermon, Aaron, this morning ; don't you think so? The pastor's at his best to-day, eh?"

The remark was made by Mr. Lyno, the deacon, as he paused for a moment to speak to the old man between the services. He was quite enthusiastic, and rubbed his hands together, with a glow upon his face in which was mingled admiration and delight.

"Ay," said Aaron Brigham, "he *was* fine, an' nae

mistake ; an' I'se delighted to see that you're at your best, an' all, Mr. Lyno. We're all at oor best *to-day*. Thenk the Lord for it ; but it is to-morrow when the strain comes on. We're generally at oor second best o' Mondays, an' by t' tahme Setterda' comes roound, I'se afeard there isn't mitch 'best' about us. Noo how d' yo' account for that ?"

"Ah, yes !" replied Mr. Lyno, over whose face the cloud of conventional contrition flitted, and from whose interior regions an expressive sigh was called up, and passed on to keep it company, "I'm afraid, you see, that the world steals too much of our thought and time during the busy working days, and so our Sunday frame of mind and sanctuar' blessing don't stand wear and tear."

"I say, friend Lyno, isn't that rayther a cowardly way o' puttin' it !" said the old patriarch, with his usual candour "It's all varry well to say 'the world steals,' an' sae to put all t' blame on the thief. We owt to know by this tahme what a cheatin' owd plunderer the 'world' is, an' it's a mortal shame if we can't tak' care o' oor oan propa'ty, especially when it's so vallyable an' precious as oors is. But I'se dootful myself whether it is 'the world' that's in fault. Isn't it *oorselves*, friend Lyno, that tempts oorselves ? On Sundays we put Jesus fost, an' if we're at oor best, oorselves second. By the tahme Setterda' comes, it's not only Number One, but nowt but him that—"

Mr. Lyno was possibly greatly grieved to tear himself away from such suggestive talk, but he obeyed a cail from the vestry with great alacrity, and left wisdom to speak, as it often does, to the thin air.

At length the second service was begun, and the snow-white cloth that had covered the table, flagon, cups, and bread, was removed. The senior deacon, Mr. Norwood Hayes, began to fill the cups, pouring out the "choice port" with a deft and accomplished hand. In another instant the fumes of the wine—I beg Mr. Hayes' pardon,

the *bouquet*—of the best that could be purchased, diffused itself through all the sanctuary of God.

How was it, think you, that Jennie Bardsley quickly turned her face, suddenly grown pale, to the place where Tom Smart was sitting? How was it that the venerable face of Aaron Brigham, with an anxious look thereon, was turned in the same direction? How was it that even Mr. Hayes himself had a passing thought that the wine was more than usually assertive in its smell that day? Mr. Lyno, too, turned his eyes on Tom Smart, but then that, perhaps, was only to see how *such* an exquisite wine must regale the olfactories of one whose highest notions of *bouquet* had been that of beer.

It was a solemn service. Mr. Dunwell was in one of his most tender and pathetic moods. During his brief preliminary address he held the little spiritual household as under a spell, while he spoke of

"The wondrous love  
The love of God to me,  
That brought the Saviour from above,  
To die on Calvary."

Then the pastor offered prayer, "gave thanks" for the precious provision of Divine grace, the gift of the Bread of Life, the wine of God; and asked a blessing on the simple symbols that brought the Cross so nigh. The bread was handed to the deacons, and carried round from pew to pew. One deacon began his work at the pulpit end of either aisle, another commenced his distribution near the door, and so the whole area was eventually served. All this was done, alike with the bread and the wine, in impressive silence. It could hardly be that the least spiritually-minded communicant present could fail to be stirred with the "solemn sweetness of that mystery," while those who "closely walked with God" were singing in their soul:—

## THE RED, RED WINE.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the Cross I spend,  
Life, and health, and peace possessing  
From the sinner's dying Friend.  
Here I'll sit, for ever viewing  
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood.  
Precious drops my soul bedewing,  
Plead and claim my peace with God."

All went well until the wine was being carried round. Then, as Tom Smart occupied the free seat on the side, just within the door, Mr. Lyno presented to him the full cup. Of course, that worthy man could not very well help fixing his eyes on the new member, in order to note how such unaccustomed nectar would be relished; or was it a prayerful interest in Tom, and the new life on which he had begun? Be that as it may, it came to pass that Mr. Lyno was even more astonished than he had thought possible.

The full cup, which had been put into the hands of Tom Smart, was a large cup, for the silver service was the gift of Mr. Norwood Hayes, and he never did things in a small or grudging way. Tom took it into his two hands, and lifted it steadily to his lips. He inhaled the full strength of its *bouquet* into his nostrils, and Tom Smart was practically slain in the sanctuary of God.

At the instant his lips touched the red, red wine, the "craving" with which every inveterate drinker is haunted, as if, as is surely true, a devil were on his track, roused into spasmodic action the muscles of his stomach, the glands of his throat and mouth; the despotic drink passion mastered him, slew him, and the hideous deed was done *for him*, not of himself, but by the church who enclosed him in their membership to save him from the tyranny of alcohol, and help him to live a Christian free man's life.

He held the cup with both hands, threw back his head, without an intervening thought, and drained it to its latest drop. *Then* came his first consciousness of any account-

ability for the deed. He uttered an exceeding great and bitter cry, a cry of horror and despair, dashed down the cup upon the floor, rushed from the chapel, and ran as if for dear life !

Jennie Bardsley was the first to realise the horrible truth, the first to rush after him with a view, God help her, to compel him to return. She knew, as no other knew, what devil had entered into him through the medium of that sacred cup. She was quickly followed by Aaron Brigham, who was suddenly seized with an almost mortal terror, a frenzy of fear for the soul and body of the man for whom he had entertained such a strong and lively hope. Then another, and another followed ; but it was of no avail. Tom Smart had gone forth bareheaded from his place, and then had disappeared ; disappeared as completely from all human view as if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed him up ! Poor Tom Smart



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

YES, Tom Smart had disappeared. We have seen how Satan's agent met him at the table of the Lord, and how poor Tom was taken captive by his deadliest foe. No sooner did he rush from the chapel, shocked and stricken, than a mad delirium seized him. His system, deprived of its accustomed alcohol, absorbed the poison with redoubled energy, and the sudden rush into the open-air added to its masterful effect.

The wine was of the best. Mr. Norwood Hayes took care of that. Some Temperance reformers tell us that most of the evils of drink arise from the doctored stuff supplied to the drinker instead of the genuine article. It may be so, but I confess that I cannot see much to choose between a pure poison and a doctored one; and I cannot but think that this kind of argument is only a sort of red herring drawn across the path of total abolition. It is poison in either case, and anyhow the effect on poor Tom Smart was just as great as if the wine had never known the juice of grapes.

Tom Smart's brain was on fire, and his conscience too: between the two their owner was buffeted about without consciousness of time or place. For some hours he must have kept up the pace at which he sped from the chapel door; running wildly, wandering aimlessly, a piece of muscular machinery, impelled by some foreign and masterful force, and subject neither to regulator nor balance-wheel.

When he came to himself, or at least sufficiently so to

understand his surroundings, the sun was setting, and he, hatless and covered with mud, for there had been a sharp thunderstorm in the course of the afternoon, was lying spent and listless on the grass at the side of a road—what road it was he did not know. It was but slowly that memory brought home to him a dim consciousness of what had happened. He lay thinking it out, struggling in a dazed wonder. Then he remembered the happy calm, the holy joy of that first public confession of his new Master and Lord, the smell of wine, that awful craving which no one who has not felt it can even begin to realise, the spasmodic gulp as the trembling hands held to his lips the flowing bowl, no, not the flowing bowl, the wine-cup of the Sacrament of Christ.

There broke in upon him at that instant a thought that gripped him like a horror. To his bitter remorse, this greater bitterness was added—an inarticulate fear that he had committed the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no remission! His brain began to whirl—surely he was going mad. With a shiver, produced as much by the chill of the evening as by the thought that scared him, he sprang hurriedly to his feet, too powerless under the pressure of that dread load either to sigh or cry, or utter even one protesting groan.

He stood aimless, uncertain, lost. He must go somewhere, anywhere, if only to escape the thoughts that were a torment. He must go somewhere. But where? Home? How can he? To loving little Kitty, and break her heart by the very sight of him? To the "chilther" who would flee at his approach? To old Aaron Brigham, that staunch, kind friend, who had built hopes as high as heaven on him? To his old companions and his new ones? How could he face them? It was impossible.

All this time the alcohol and fever in his blood are doing their foul work. His head seems as though it certainly will

burst asunder. Every throb of his labouring and excited heart drives the blood to his already over-heated brain, and at last he is compelled to groan long and loudly, as the only possible vent for the agony, mental and bodily, which threatens a fatal end.

On he goes with unsteady limbs, walking deviously, and yet as if for dear life, then staggering and pausing to get a little control again. And then on again, on, on—but whither? This lasts but a little while, for the fire in him is burning high, and the fuel is low for such a rate of combustion. He must have drink. The fire in his blood consumes him.

The gathering twilight plays strange tricks with his vision. The trees take awesome shapes; grinning faces jeer and mock at him from out the hedgerows. All things on which the eye looks seem instinct with life, but it is the life of hell. Unclean spirits whisper among themselves, and laugh uproariously; but make no noise. He cannot hear what they say, but he knows just as well as if he did. Yes, they are rejoicing that he is damned, and will become one of them. At this he groans and shuts his eyes, only to see them more clearly, and to realise their hideous shapes more fully than before.

How *can* he endure it? He must drink. Is there no house near by? Shall he never reach one? The road is getting rougher and rougher, and rises as he lifts his feet, and sinks again when he would place them down.

The moon already sometime risen, gains power on the setting of the sun, and glimmers on the surface of a weed-grown but rush-mounted pool that holds picturesque possession of an old marl pit lying open and unprotected to the road. The glimmering light attracts him. Stooping painfully to the water's edge, he bathes his burning forehead; the water is cool and pleasant, and so still!

Why not quench the fires that consume him, and hide his head from the gaze of those jeering phantoms, in those peaceful and inviting depths?

Do the thoughts of man, I wonder, leave their imprint on the things surrounding him? Had some other sorrow-haunted human soul thought these thoughts in that uncanny spot? Who can tell?

That fate, however, was not for Tom Smart. He must have a drink first, and so, slightly refreshed by the bathing of his heated brow, he once more hurried on; on, still on—but whither?

At length he saw the dim lights of a village in the darkening distance, and, of course, he knew that there he could get all he needed in the way of drink. Alas, there are but few villages in which *that* is not to be procured. Even where the villagers themselves would fain be rid of the evil thing, it is thrust upon them, and held there under the protection of the power and majesty of British law! A village implies a “pub.,” probably two, very likely three, often enough four. There may possibly be no place of worship—that is not held necessary—but the public-house we have always with us to minister to the wants of man!

But, then, had he any money?

Anxiously he groped in the pockets of his trousers, though he seemed scarcely able to control his fingers, and for a while his non-success in the eager search filled him with dismay. Yes, at last. Oh!—the joy of it!—he felt a coin; alas, it was only one.

Carefully bringing it out to the light of the moon, he was overjoyed to find that it was a shilling. He wondered vaguely how that was. He had surely given up all his money into Kitty’s care. That had been the rule in these later and better days; the exception was in the case of the purchase of his “lahtle hoosekeeper’s” boots and hats. Then he remembered. He had kept that shilling for the

collection at his first Communion. It was a big sum for a labouring-man like him to give, but then it was his first-fruits, and first love hath a willing heart and an open hand.

The very first house he came to was a "pub." There was a cluster of villagers drinking at the public bar. The time for the church service was over; and, after the worship of God had been fitly protected from rivalry and invasion, the worship of His rival had fair play. But poor Tom Smart dared not join them. Hatless and mud-covered as he was, he could not face either the looks or the questions that were sure to be levelled at him.

Fortunately, the little room at the side was empty. A feeble candle shed its dim light upon the gloom, and yet in the gloom he sat, away from the neighbourhood of the slender flame. Then he knocked lightly, uncertainly, on the table, as if he shrank from summoning observant eyes. He waited what to his scorching thirst seemed a long, long time, and, in a sort of desperation born of his great necessity, he knocked more loudly with the edge of the consecrated shilling, soon to be sadly misapplied.

A girl of the house came in, in answer to his call, took the shilling from the table where he had laid it—it was a case in which "money first" was seen to be a prudent precaution—asked him what he wanted, and disappeared. She quickly returned, set down the brandy he had ordered, together with the change, and rushed off again as rapidly as before. Evidently she was none too much pleased with this unwelcome interruption to her Sunday evening flirtation. She took no notice whatever of Tom. Why should she? He, at any rate, was glad of it.

For one moment, only one, Tom Smart held the glass between his eye and the light, then flung back his head, drained the contents at a gulp, and left, feeling himself "another man."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

**I**T was early on the following Tuesday, before yet the morning light had begun to creep up the eastern sky, that John Hodson, a small tenant farmer, on his way to the Hull market with a load of vegetables, met with an adventure—a thing that had not happened to him once in the twenty years during which he had regularly, twice a week, taken his load of vegetables, fruit, eggs, chickens, or whatever else was in season, into Hull, as regularly returning the same evening.

John was far more watchful travelling to market than he was in returning, and, if truth must be told, he had more than once spent the greater part of the night fast asleep in his market cart, just outside his own farmyard gate, for though his mare, which, I believe had been travelling the road almost as long as he had, knew well enough how to get home, yet she never quite mastered the art of opening the gate. This, though I have read of its being done by an equine pet, is rather more than could be expected of an ordinary horse.

When going to market, however, John always walked partly to relieve the load, and partly to keep himself awake. Generally, he took up a position behind the spring cart, grasping the back-board and so getting a bit of help, besides being able, if so minded—and he generally was minded—to snatch a quiet snooze, if not a full sleep, as he went on.

He was enjoying one of these stolen snoozes at the time of the adventure, when the mare suddenly stopped. John didn't. As a natural consequence, his nose came in some-

what violent contact with the edge of the back-board. This woke him effectually. He was a good fellow, so he neither swore nor thrashed his mare, as I am afraid a good many would have done under similar circumstances. Instead of this, he went round to his horse's head, patted her on the neck, and asked what all the trouble was about.

"What's the matter now, Polly? Eh, lass?"

Polly didn't say anything, but she looked a good bit frightened, and shy of the hedge on her near side, so John proceeded to explore. The moon had set some time, and as it was too dark to distinguish anything very clearly, he struck a match, and after a little bother succeeded in lighting the tallow dip in his lanthorn, which he invariably carried with him, and as invariably never used.

It was rather an eerie sensation that came over him, when, by the aid of a light, he saw lying in the hedgerow what he at first took to be the body of a murdered man. He was nearer right than he knew, though the man was not then dead, and though the agents of his undoing—who dispense that "good creature of God," are not as yet—the more's the pity—looked upon as murderers in English law.

A very slight inspection showed him that the man was dying, though to John's thinking he was as near dead as made very little difference. The thing that perplexed him was what to do with his find. To a man of John Hodson's build, leaving him where he was was out of the question. So, after discussing various plans with his mare, he decided at last to take him to the infirmary at Hull, if he could only get assistance to lift him into the cart. He did not think the jolting would do him any more harm than the wet grass, and, besides, he could think of no better plan of dealing with him.

He had not long arrived at this decision when up the road came another market cart, the owner of which was well known to him, and with his assistance Tom Smart, for he it

was, was carefully lifted into the cart, and made as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

The man was altogether unconscious, and only moaned as he was lifted in the cart, and murmured "Kitty." In due time they arrived at the infirmary, and though it happened to be very full at the time, they of course took the patient in, after having obtained all the information concerning him that John Hodson had to give, which, as my readers know, was but very little.

It was a very sad little heart that beat in the bosom of sweet little Kitty that Sabbath day, when she learnt from the kindly lips of Jennie Bardsley that her father had gone away. Jennie was greatly at a loss how to treat the matter, but Kitty's anxious questioning look could not be evaded, and so she explained to the bairn that her father had got the drink craving on him again, and had gone away for a short walk to try to master it, but he would be back soon, she added, hopefully, nor did she for a minute doubt that what she said was true; but Tom Smart never came back to Netherborough again. She could not tell the child what it was that had brought the craving on again, nor did Kitty think to ask. She accepted Miss Bardsley's word, and took consolation from the fact that he would be back again soon, and meanwhile she would pray for him.

During the afternoon Jennie got some of her friends to scour the neighbourhood, but no signs of the missing man could be found. No one had seen him, and when evening came and poor little Kitty began to lose hope, Jennie hardly dared think as to what might have become of him.

Monday came and went and still no signs. Even Norwood Hayes felt ill at ease, and had men out searching the dykes and ditches, and enquiries were instituted in the neighbouring villages, but it was all of no avail. And so Tuesday passed and Wednesday. All the waters in the district were fruitlessly dragged, even the dangerous wayside



pond in which poor Tom Smart had laved his fever-stricken brow, but of course, in vain. Mrs. Consett was very good to her little neighbour, but Kitty was not satisfied, and so on Thursday, when she had got the "chilther" their breakfast and prepared dinner for them, she put on her new hat and boots and her little cloak, and went out quietly, for fear Mrs. Consett should hear, telling the bairns that she was going out to bring father home, and they were quite content.

Later in the day, when Jennie Bardsley came in, as her wont had been since Sunday, she was astonished and troubled to find Kitty gone, almost as completely as her father—but Kitty was in safe hands.

Kitty's idea of things was very vague—she was only a little one, but she was bound to find her father, and she was sure she could. These other people could not find him because he was not their father, but she could—hadn't she often found him before?

As she passed up the street, she peered cautiously in at the public-houses on her way, dreading, yet hoping, to find him there, but she could see no signs of him. One or two saw her and pitied her, and even the wife of one of the very publicans who had done no little in times past towards ruining her father's body and soul, could not repress a tear as she caught sight of her poor, wan, troubled little face peeping timidly through the temptingly swung door. After leaving Netherborough she walked on and on till she was well away from the town, and then she began to look out for someone whom she might ask if they knew anything about him.

One or two chance passers looked at her curiously, but anxious as she was, she could not make up her mind to speak to them, and she began to feel tired and disappointed, and so, poor little soul, she sat down on a milestone and began to cry.

"Hallo, little woman, what's the matter noo? This'll never do."

The voice was so cheery and pleasant that Kitty could not help but look up, and the face she saw was so pleasant and cheerful too, that she had to smile through her tears.

"That's better, ma bairn. Noo what's all the trouble?"

Kitty saw that the stranger who was speaking to her must have got out of the trap that was standing on the road, and therefore he might have come from somewhere where her father was; so she summoned up courage at last, and ventured to ask him if he had seen her father.

"Why? hev you lost him, bairn? What was he like?"

This was a poser to Kitty. She quite thought everybody would know her father at once, and besides, now she came to think of it, she couldn't for the life of her remember what he was like.

"He was like—like feyther, that's all," said she, and the stranger laughed a hearty, happy laugh, but Kitty was rather offended.

"And what do they call you, little one?"

"Kitty—Kitty Smart, and father's name's Smart too, but they call him Tom."

"Kitty, eh?" and the stranger's face grew serious. "And where do you live?"

"At Netherborough."

"Well, I'm going to Netherborough to see the new line, and so we'll go together, shall we?"

Kitty was by no means loth, although she had not yet succeeded in finding her father. On the way back the stranger found out quite a lot about her and her father, and the result was that when they got to Netherborough he went straight to Jennie Bardsley's home, and brought her little runaway back to her safe and sound, greatly to her delight. What is more, he told her all he knew about poor Tom Smart, how he had found him unconscious, and had

taken him to the Hull Infirmary, where he was then lying, for, as my readers will readily have guessed, the stranger was none other than John Hodson. And so you see Kitty had been in safe hands, for are not God's hands safe? And she had found her father after all.

Jennie made arrangements to drive into Hull the next day, taking Kitty with her. Of course she explained to the little one that her father was very ill, but even she was surprised when she saw him.

They were readily admitted, for, as they told Jennie, death was only a question of hours, and perhaps not that.

Poor Kitty, she was told she must be very quiet, but the sight of her father lying there was too much for her, and she fell on the bedside, crying, "Feyther, speak to me."

Tom opened his eyes, recognised her, and smiling weakly, said, "Ma bairn;" and Kitty was half wild with joy.

When the doctor saw him a little later, he tried to cheer him with thoughts of getting well, but Tom knew better.

"Noa, doctor, ah sall nivver be better, an' ah thenk God for it."

Jennie knew what he meant; he felt the only safe place for him was by his Saviour's side. The fight with drink was too much for him in this Christian land of ours, where at every step is placed a pitfall to entrap the feet of the unwary.

He told Jennie very briefly what had happened to him since the drinking of that fatal cup, as far as he could remember, and then the nurse told them it would be better to leave him and come again on the morrow. Tom smiled sadly at that, and as he said good-bye to Miss Bardsley, he got her to promise him to look after his bairns. His leave taking of Kitty is too sacred a thing for words.

On the morrow Tom Smart was dead. He had died in the night as peacefully as a child falls asleep.

Jennie reproached herself somewhat that she had not spoken to him of Christ, but then how could she speak of

Him to this victim of the travesty of the Supper of our Lord. After all, she felt that Tom was right when he thanked God that he should die.

It may seem to some of my readers that Tom Smart's sad fall on the very threshold of church life is an impossible case. I have good reason to know that the same stumbling-block that ground him to powder is sadly effective and often fatal at this day.

There are many good Christian men and women who regularly pass on the cup untasted as they "sit at Jesus' feast of love." Very hard thoughts are entertained concerning them, and very unkind words are spoken. But the fact is that many of them dare not put their lips to it, lest the sleeping devil of the past habit be aroused to their destruction.

It is but a very short time ago that a reclaimed drunkard, brought to Christ during a Gospel Mission at my own church, gave me some proof of this. He remained behind as a spectator at the Sunday evening communion service. When the wine was poured out, he started to his feet and left the chapel. The first smell of his dread enemy rekindled desire, and it was only by "leaving the temptation," and walking rapidly to and fro in the chapel grounds, that he rid himself of its effects!

Think of it! *This* was the symbol of the Wine of Life! This was the emblem of the blood that saves!

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

**I**T is pleasant to turn to happier and more congenial scenes. Lily Lodge, the cosy and attractive home of the grand old patriarch, Aaron Brigham, was bright with the light of wax candles, for on this auspicious night, some few days before poor Tom Smart's sad hap filled his aged heart with sorrow, the ordinary gleam of the familiar "dip" was not good enough for the occasion.

Lily Lodge was then the house of feasting ; that, standing by itself, is not saying much, perhaps, for feasting is often a very doleful business, but it was also a house of mirth. Esther Harland had done her best, and that *is* saying much, to provide a real downright genuine East Yorkshire tea. I dare say that many of my readers have never enjoyed that experience. Those who have will not hesitate to say, "I have been there, and still would go," though they may hesitate just a *little* at finishing the quotation. But there was an element in that feast that surpassed, in pleasantness and joy-provoking quality, Esther Harland's wonderful confections.

The fact is that George Caffer and his wife, and Phil Lambert and *his* wife, were Aaron Brigham's specially invited guests that evening, and the "high tea" was held in honour of the complete enfranchisement of the two cronies from the thralldom of the "Black Swan," and their happy riddance of the alcoholic demons which, like Sindbad's Old Man of the Mountain, had sat upon their shoulders for five-and-twenty dreadful years, and had all but choked the life out of them by its cruel pressure on the throat.

The painter had finished the beautifying of Aaron's house, had put all his art and skill into the task, and had turned out a bit of genuine teetotal work such as he had never surpassed in his palmiest days. The way in which he had "grained" the front door and the window shutters in imitation oak, had become quite a wonderment to admiring Netherborough, and had advertised alike his sobriety and superior ability far and wide. As a consequence his business had increased "by leaps and bounds," and already he had been compelled to employ a journeyman, if not two.

The barber, true to his vow, "Niver nae mair," had kept steadily to his shop, and with a hand quite as steady as his fidelity to the operating chair had gained the proud position of smoother-general to half the adult chins in Netherborough; while the surplus locks of the juvenile Netherburghers strewed the floor of his shop like "leaves in Valambrosa." Even Dr. Medway was constrained to own that his chestnut-wig was so skilfully manipulated that it sat as close and felt as natural as if it were rooted in its place. We must always except, however, those too numerous occasions when it was dishevelled and dislodged by his potent potations of port wine.

Two happier women than the cronies' wives it would be hard to find through all the country side. Mrs. Lambert, especially, seemed almost re-juvenated, and the last trace of the pallor and the sickness that seemed a sickness unto death had gone from the once wasted and sorrow-stricken face. And who was the tall, good-looking lassie that was waiting at the table, and otherwise helping Esther Harland in her onerous household duties, on that great day? She looks bonny enough and bright enough in all conscience, and one glance at her is sufficient to show that her young life is without a cloud.

This is the "maiden all forlorn," ragged, miserable, morose, and generally tired of all things, who snappishly

expressed a wish to Aaron Brigham that her father, Phil Lambert, would "go te t' 'Black Swan,' an' niver cum back nae mair." Now, it was her father who had said, "Niver nae mair," and it was *that* which had wrought the happy tranformation in the life and looks of "the drunkard's child!"

The face of dear old Aaron Brigham was a "study for a painter;" especially for that particular painter whose eyes were bent on him, overflowing with admiration, gratitude, and love. It was quite usual for Aaron's expressive face, except when it was shadowed by somebody else's sorrow, to wear "a light that never shone on sea or land," but that night there was a radiance shining on it and from it that glowed in every feature, and gilded his snow-white hair.

The conversation, both at the tea-table and afterwards, was turned, chiefly by the old man himself, into a variety of channels; but it always trembled back, like the mariner's needle to the north, to the subject of Aaron's happy interference with the business of the "Black Swan," and the joyful change that had made that cheerful party possible.

"Why, I'se not disposed to say that I isn't desperat glad 'at things hez turned oot as they hev," said the old man, "but I'se quite willin' to hev nowt nae mair said aboot it. I think the Lord 'at He put it i' my heart; but there, it's been there for mony a year, as it is i' the hearts o' thoosands o' Christian folk. Like me, they see, an, sorrow, an' wish, an' resolve to mend things, an', like me, they're sadly apt to mek' that sarve; an' even to tek' a bit o' credit for hevin' sitch feelin's. But what's wanted is for 'em to do summat; to mek' an effort, like; not only to wish, but to try, an' if a trial isn't successful, why then to try and try till it *is*. You see, that plan carried oot by ivery Christian wisher, will mek' ivery wisher a worker, an' then the car o' Bacchus 'll niver ride i' front o' the chariot o' Jesus ony mair. I'll tell you what it is; the car o' Bacchus,

as they call it, will varry soon stop runnin' at all if t' Christian churches o' this country unyoke theirselves, fling off the harness, an' refuse to pull it another yard."

The whole party, from aged Aaron to the barber's bonnie lassie, were agreed on this, and if not only local, but even universal, prohibition had been put to the vote, it would have been "passed unanimously and with acclamation."

But then, you see, they were of the people, and as yet the people have very little to do with the making of the laws that regulate strong drink. We shall manage these things better by-and-by.

The Temperance Society in Netherborough was at a low ebb. Its fortunes, never very rosy, had sunk at once after Walter Bardsley's unhappy withdrawal. Aaron Brigham was very anxious to do something to restore its fallen fortunes; and it was mainly with this object in view that he invited his guests that evening.

Both Caffer and Lambert were capable talkers, and he wisely judged that the witness of two such well-known converts would be invaluable. Better still, 'Liza Lambert volunteered to tell the story of her new life and her regenerated home in the public ear. It was the rarest of rare things in those days for women to take any public platform, but if ever there was a subject on which woman might well grow eloquent, and stir the English public with convincing voice, it is the curse of intemperance and the blighting influence of strong drink on English hearths and in English homes; and the just demand of English women and children to be rid for ever of the shame and sorrow to which it dooms them.

Eventually both the painter and the barber became towers of strength to the unpopular cause; and by their instrumentality quite a number of inveterate toppers were led to range themselves beneath the Temperance banner.



"If George Caffer and Phil Lambert can turn their back on beer, *I* can."

It is wonderful in how many, many instances that argument led to the reclamation of those who had given themselves up as lost! While 'Liza Lambert's simple, plaintive, touching story won converts to Temperance principles on all hands and all sides.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

FOR some time past, young Cuthbert Hayes had been having rather an easy time of it. It was true he was supposed to be engaged in his father's business, but this was only a polite way of intimating that he was doing nothing, for Mr. Norwood Hayes still had complete control of his business affairs, and in the town of Netherborough, though there was plenty of work for one head in the cornfactor's business, there certainly was not enough to keep two occupied. Of late, however, Norwood Hayes had had serious thoughts of retiring from active participation in his concern in order to give Cuthbert a chance, and very probably, I think, with an eye to Parliamentary honours. Before he took the final step, he was anxious that Cuthbert should have some practical acquaintance with the business other than Netherborough and his own office could supply. Accordingly, he broached the subject one evening to his son, suggesting that he should place him for a short time, at any rate, with a friend of his, a large cornfactor in Hull. Cuthbert, dazzled more with the idea of really being his own master than with the prospect of gaining an insight into his father's business, was only too willing.

Application was made to Mr. Nuncaster, the cornfactor in question, and he, though he had no vacancy at the time, agreed to take Cuthbert to oblige his old friend, Norwood Hayes.

Norwood Hayes was, perhaps, willingly blind to the downward course on which his son had already entered, but he took the occasion of his son's departure to give him

one of those manly expressions of his opinion which had so captivated Walter Bardsley, and had, alas, practically led to his discomfiture at the hands of his own hereditary foe—strong drink.

He spoke to him wisely and earnestly concerning the many temptations that beset a young man's footsteps in a large town, and especially in a seaport town such as Hull. Incidentally he mentioned the dangers of intemperance, and strongly impressed on him the folly of yielding to the seductive influence of alcohol.

"I think you will bear me out," said he, "that I have always set you an example of self-restraint. There are some weak-kneed souls who claim that the only safety lies in total abstinence. I cannot agree with them, for I think that, as a rule, their self-assumed righteousness is in the worst possible taste, and it is neither wise nor gentlemanly to make one's self conspicuous, except when some great principle is at stake, and even then I often think that more is gained, in the long run, by inostentatious silence than by a loud-mouthed profession of our own belief. Still it is possible to err on the other side, and if you feel that alcohol, which should be a willing and pleasant servant, is becoming your master, I should certainly advise you to abstain entirely rather than give way to it. That, however, is a contingency which I am sure is not likely to happen to a son of mine."

Of course Cuthbert, though on the very brink of that contingency which his father thought so remote, cordially agreed with everything said, and, indeed, he expressed his contempt of the feebly-fibred abstainer in even stronger words than Norwood Hayes himself.

"Mr. Nuncaster," he continued, "is a Christian gentleman, a deacon at Cod Street Chapel. He has promised me to look after you as if you were his own (Cuthbert did not relish this piece of information). Let me beg of you,

therefore, if ever you should happen to get into any little trouble, as we are all liable to do, to make as great a confidant of him as you would of me. I am sure he will advise and guide you even better than I could."

And thus Norwood Hayes, having equipped his son's bark with a balloon by way of an anchor, launched him out upon the stormy waves of life. This, at best, risky experiment meant to Cuthbert Hayes certain, speedy, and total shipwreck.

Mr. Nuncaster did all that could be reasonably expected of him for young Cuthbert. In the first place, he took lodgings for him in a respectable part of the town, which lodgings he vacated for more congenial quarters within a month, as the landlady objected to the unconscionable hours he kept. He also took a sitting for him at Cod Street, which he occupied twice, and twice only; and he invited him up to dinner on a Sunday, but, as he entertained him afterwards by going to sleep, this privilege was soon dispensed with likewise.

In business matters he was equally considerate. As young Hayes was only to be with them a short time, and, indeed, had no need to be there at all, he did not bother him by keeping him at the desk, but at once introduced him to the brighter side of a cornfactor's life—the corn-exchange, the bar of the "Double Locks"—the former the place where business was nominally done, and the latter the place where it was actually transacted, over a friendly bottle of wine or two, or more, as it happened. It really did not take long to learn the corn business in those days; it's just about as simple even now. It is worked on the plan of "setting a sprat to catch a whale." When you are buying, you lay out the "sprat" on liquor, till you have made the other man fool enough to let you have his corn at your own price, and similarly when selling. When the bargain is concluded, you have another drink to settle it.

Cuthbert was an apt pupil. Though he had at first nothing to buy or sell, he nevertheless picked up the other part of the business with wonderful facility, and when he came to conduct some slight operations for his firm he was an adept. Then he tried a speculation or two on his own account with phenomenal success, and as a result turned up at the office in the afternoon unequivocally drunk. Mr. Nuncaster sent him home in a cab.

On the morrow he remonstrated with him. Cuthbert was apologetic, and within the week was drunk again in office hours. This time he had made a splendid bargain for the firm, and somehow or other Mr. Nuncaster failed to observe his young clerk's condition.

Of course Cuthbert got into a "capital set," so much so that he almost forgot what it was to rise without a splitting headache in the morning, which could only be conquered by a "hair of the dog that bit him."

Gradually he became conscious that the drink-habit was mastering him, but still he was unable to shake himself free. Then he made a fool of himself by getting thoroughly drunk on one or two occasions before the bargain was struck, and so landing his firm in for two or three very poor things. Thereupon his governor informed him that if this occurred again he would have no further need of his services, and for his father's sake he made a valiant effort to keep himself straight, but the fatal bound had been passed, and he found himself powerless to resist the craving for drink.

At last the crisis came. Mr. Nuncaster sent Cuthbert home, and wrote to his father regretting that he had not informed him of his son's weakness, for had he done so he might then have been able to have avoided this unpleasant occurrence. He was greatly sorry for it, but when, after repeated warnings, Cuthbert persisted in appearing on the Corn Exchange in a state of intoxication, it was no longer possible to keep him, if only for the credit of the firm.



AT THE OFFICE IN THE AFTERNOON UNEQUIVOCABLY DRUNK.  
*Page 254.*



Cuthbert followed this letter to Netherborough. When he saw his father he informed him in a drunken serious manner that he had thoroughly learnt the business.

Norwood Hayes did his best, when too late, to retrieve his son. Cuthbert would have drink. The locks that defied his mother were of no avail against him; he broke them open and helped himself. There were no homes for inebriates then-a-day, but at last Norwood Hayes had to put his son under a doctor's care, and the house he lived in had iron bars across the windows, and the doors were kept locked. Norwood Hayes was a broken, disappointed man, but the lesson was almost learnt.

Young Cuthbert Hayes had but a short stay in Mr. Nuncaster's office, though it was long enough to ruin him body and soul. He had not been in Hull long at the time of Tom Smart's breakdown and death, and though I have followed him more particularly for a time, it must not be considered that events at Netherborough stood still.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ONE of the annual events which most stirred the calm of Netherborough life into something like excitement, was the ODD FELLOWS' FEAST. I put it down in capitals for the sake of auld lang syne. To me, in the days of childhood, it was nothing less than a red letter day. There was no school that day, and as my schoolmaster was of the strictly Rhadamanthus order, a whole day's holiday made the "feast" as welcome as a gift from the gods.

Then there was the "great procession!" Three hundred men adorned with blue sashes and rosettes, each sash embroidered in gold thread with the symbol of the lodge, and there were the officers in gleaming regalia. These all marched along the Netherborough streets, headed by an enormous silken flag, on which was painted the cosy home of a thrifty Odd Fellow, and the quaint device of the "Royal Albert Lodge;" while many smaller flags and bannerets were carried by bearers placed at intervals on the line of march.

The Netherborough celebrated brass band timed the march to the strains of its resounding music, and I can safely say that I have never heard more thrilling and inspiring strains than those which fell upon my youthful ear in those far off days, when pleasant sounds and sights had all the glamour of youth upon them.

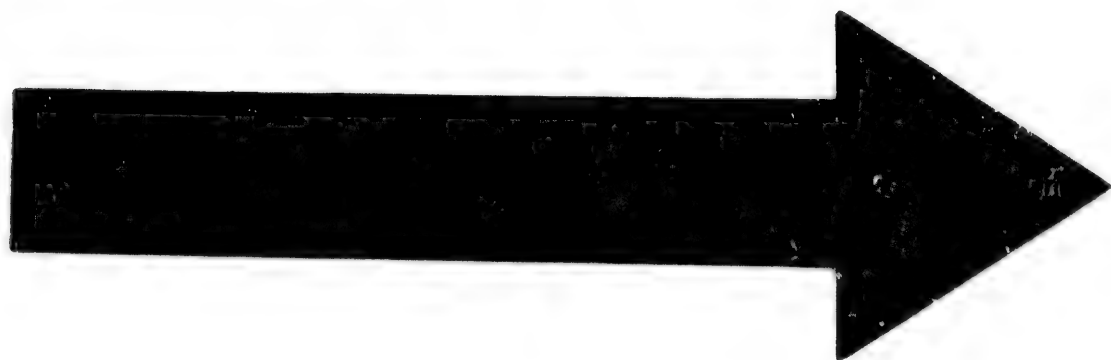
The importance of the festival and the crowds of holiday makers made it worth the while for the vendors of nuts, gingerbread, and other bilious edibles, to erect their stalls in the market-place; and there was also that which gave the

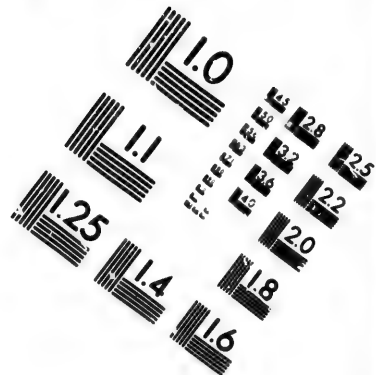
holiday an added glory, namely, pence in my usually impecunious pocket, all for my spending on that delightful day. Do I not well to "gush" a little on this subject, and to celebrate in capitals the Odd Fellows' feast.

After the members of the club had sufficiently perambulated the town, and impressed the eyes of the citizens with the external glories of Odd Fellowship, they returned to the starting-place, the "Netherborough Arms." All the monthly meetings of the club were held in that hospitable hostelry, whose "Arms" were always open, in more senses than one, to take them in.

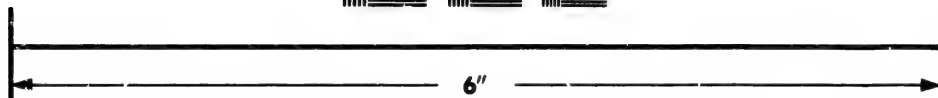
The result of this absurd and suicidal arrangement was that many of the stone-blind members of the club expended more money at the bar and in the tap room than the useful economies of club-thrift amounted to. These ensured them an allowance in time of sickness, and a grant at death, to make the blow fall more lightly on the widow and the orphans left behind! Thank God, that in these wiser days that folly is abated. Friendly Societies, I believe, are compelled to hold their "lodges" in better quarters, and that financial leakage and stultifying folly is largely stopped. Of course, "the trade" is an extensive loser, but the time is coming, hasting, I would fain say, when the people of this license-ridden England will come to a fairly unanimous decision that the loss of "the trade" will be a general gain.

Well, the annual feast of the Odd Fellows was held in Netherborough, not a great while after poor Tom Smart had fallen in his fight with Apollyon, in the place where, above all others in this wide world, that Satanic spirit should surely find no rest. After the annual business of the club was transacted, a dinner was provided in the club-room of the inn. Of course, much strong ale and still stronger liquors were freely quaffed by all, and sundry; toasts were honoured, speeches were made, and social hilarity was the order of the day.





A resolution test chart featuring several groups of horizontal and vertical lines of varying thicknesses. Each group is accompanied by a numerical value indicating the resolution level. The values include 1.0, 1.1, 1.25, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.0, 2.2, 2.5, 2.8, 3.2, 3.6, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0, 5.6, 6.3, 7.1, 8.0, 9.0, 10, 11.2, 12.5, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22.5, 25, 28, 32, 36, 40, 45, 50, 56, 63, 71, 80, 90, 100, 112, 125, 140, 160, 180, 200, 224, 250, 280, 315, 360, 400, 450, 500, 560, 630, 710, 800, 900, 1000, 1120, 1250, 1400, 1600, 1800, 2000, 2240, 2500, 2800, 3150, 3600, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5600, 6300, 7100, 8000, 9000, 10000.



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Of course, the leading magnates of the town were present. Dr. Medway of the purple countenance was there as the club-doctor, and his younger rival as an invited guest. Lawyer Everett was there as the club-solicitor; and besides other semi-officials, and honorary members, several invited visitors from the town and neighbourhood. Among these was Walter Bardsley and his young brother-in-law, Cuthbert Hayes. These two had been more than ever intimate as companions and friends, and it was the subject of universal remark in Netherborough that both of them had changed during the brief space that had elapsed since Walter's wedding-day.

Of course, the worthy vicar was a distinguished guest, as was also the Rev. Daniel Dunwell, the excellent Nonconformist minister. His presence was always welcomed with a triple round of cheers. His speeches were so sound and sensible, so full of wit and humour, and his apt and timely jokes and stories never failed to set the table in a roar. Not but that on occasion Mr. Dunwell was most grave and serious in his advice to the men of the club. He spoke lovingly and well of the value of forethought, thrift, and their kindred virtues, not forgetting, too, to speak of the wisdom and necessity of insuring happy provision of the world to come.

On this particular occasion, Mr. Dunwell excelled himself. By his wonderful combination of pathos and humour, he roused the company to a pitch of enthusiasm not common to them, even when under the spell of his own fascinating speech. All this was the more remarkable because it was evident to everybody that Mr. Dunwell was "not at all himself." He was wan and worried in appearance, had dark rings about his sunken eyes, and the smiles and general jauntiness that were more or less suitable to the occasion were evidently assumed, and maintained only by a strong effort of the will. His more intimate friends had

noted this change in him for many days past, but only a very few of them ascribed it to its real cause. The fact is that Tom Smart's dreadful misadventure at the sacramental service, and his mysterious disappearance, had fallen on the pastor of "Zion" like a blow, and had brought him face to face with questions such as he had never asked himself before.

At the close of his address everybody seemed wishful to take wine with him. He was ever courteous and genial, and had not the heart to disoblige. Little by little, and quite unaware of it all, he passed the bounds of moderation and became flushed and "elevated." The red flag of danger showed itself upon his face, but, alas! he himself could not read the warning. Others noted it; some with a wicked pleasure; some with a degree of pain.

Mr. Norwood Hayes saw it, and was grieved! he saw it develop and was angry. He was led, at length, to look at him steadily with a view to catch his eye, his own eye being filled with meaning and rebuke. His friend and pastor, however, was too obfuscated to readily read the warning. When he did perceive it, he intimated his intention to retire. This was greeted by a protest so strong, so universal, that he sank again upon his seat with a foolish smile upon his handsome face.

Meanwhile Dr. Medway, the soaked and seasoned medico, who avowed such faith in the medical virtues of port wine, and who showed his faith by his works, alike in his prescriptions and his practice, leaned towards Lawyer Everett, his boon companion in many a revel, and whispered to him. Everett professed, so far as religion was concerned, to be an unbeliever, and never lost an opportunity of scoffing at or putting shame on those who held a nobler creed. His eyes brightened at what the doctor had said, and an evil smile came across his face. He nodded his approval. Turning to his neighbour on the other side,

who was no other than that pink of honour, Dick Bardsley, he whispered in turn to him. The precious trio allied themselves forthwith to devise and work out a piece of devilry.

A little later on, Lawyer Everett rose to his feet and was greeted with a round of cheers. He also was a glib and taking speaker, and had the ear of his audience at once. Addressing the president of the evening, he said: "I venture to express the hope, Mr. President, that you will pardon the liberty I take in attempting to interfere with the prescribed list of toasts on this occasion. I think, sir, that when you hear the toast that I would propose, I shall have your heartiest permission and approval." Here he paused, looking to the chair inquiringly. The president nodded a gracious permission to proceed.

"We have had with us for many years at these annual festivities," resumed the lawyer, "the presence of our brilliant and eloquent friend and brother, if he will allow me the honour of calling him so, the Rev. Daniel Dunwell." Here there was vociferous applause. "I was quite sure," continued the speaker, "that the name would get that unmistakable greeting. Well, I have heard the reverend gentleman speak on many occasions, in many places, and on many subjects, but I must say that I have never heard him to such advantage, never felt so spellbound, never had all that is best in me" (which was not much) "so roused and strengthened, as by the lucid, lively, witty, pathetic, humorous, beautiful, and brilliant speech we have heard from his lips to-night. I am willing to bear all the responsibility of this somewhat irregular toast, even to the providing of sufficient champagne of the Nonpareil Brand in which to do it honour. I would suggest that the gentleman whom we delight to honour, be given a little time before he responds, seeing that he has been taken by surprise. Fill your glasses, gentlemen, and let us ask the



president to lead us in drinking health, long life, and prosperity to the Reverend Daniel Dunwell."

They all rose from their seats, "did full justice" to the toast, and to the Nonpareil too, and joined thereafter in a tumultuous cheer. Mr. Dunwell was taken by surprise, and he was grateful for the pause provided for him before he ventured to reply. Alas, he employed the time in seeking inspiration from the flowing bowl, just as the plotters had expected. Then he arose, and the precious trio who had planned the shameful snare knew that the hour of their triumph was at hand.

No sooner had he risen than he dropped again into his seat. Again he made the effort to stand upon his feet, and leaning both hands upon the table, he lifted up his face. And what a face! His hair was in disorder, his eyes were dull and heavy, and his eyelids could not succeed in their struggle to keep unshut; his features were red and swollen, and his mouth was unable to shape itself to utter the incoherencies he aimed at. He swayed from side to side mumbled a few sounds of unintelligible drivel, and then literally slid down in a huddled heap upon his chair!

A great silence filled the room! A silence of surprise; a silence of disgust; a silence of sorrow and dismay; a silence of exultation and delight.

Then Mr. Norwood Hayes announced that Mr. Dunwell had been taken ill, and opening a side door close by the end of the raised table where the president sat surrounded by the leading guests, he and another succeeded in getting him removed.

The whispered interpretation of the supposed "illness" given to his comrades by Dr. Medway in this cruel and vile plot, was sufficiently expressive; and, alas! was also more than sufficiently true. "He's as drunk as a lord!" said he, with an exultant chuckle, that revealed the baseness of the man. The kindly intentioned effort of Mr. Hayes and a

few other staunch friends to impose and urge the "illness" theory on the general public as the cause of Mr. Dunwell's strange conduct at the club feast, did something to check the tide of feeling that was setting fast against the unhappy man, but both he and they felt that his career at Netherborough was all but ended ; and, so far as he was concerned, he was more than willing that this should be. The story of this fall is terrible in the telling. Such deeds of death and doom must of a certainty wring the hearts of our attendant angels, and weigh down the mighty soul of that Intercessor whom we ignore.

The idea must not be entertained for one moment that Daniel Dunwell had been anything other than a Christian man, a true disciple of Jesus Christ in everything that made his life worthy and useful, except in his attitude on the drink question. In defence of that position he had the support of popular custom, common wont and usage, and the conventional Christianity which refuses to regard the grim destroyer of soul and body as a forbidden thing.

Since that memorable Communion Service which ended so desperately for poor Tom Smart, Mr. Dunwell had never been himself. Crushed down by an overwhelming sense of the utter collapse of all hope for the poor reformed drunkard, now that his feet had been tripped up in the very sanctuary of Christ, he had for weeks past found himself unequal to the preparation of his sermons. He groaned in bitterness of soul to feel that he could *not* do it without a stimulus from the decanter, and yet he hated himself the more for his confession of weakness, this acknowledgment of bonds that he could not break.

How he wrestled with the prince of the power of the air in his quiet study will never be known until the day when all things are revealed ; but that he did so wrestle, I am as certain as that he was utterly vanquished in the fight. There are those living at this day who can witness to the

evidences he bore of that parlous struggle in his harassed and careworn face. During those last clouded weeks of his Netherborough career, he could never rid himself of the picture of poor Smart. The whole sad scene was burnt in upon his heart and brain. Many a time he would return from a weary, heartless service which was no balm to him, but gall and bitterness, as he did on the night of poor Smart's fall, to enter his study, lock the door, fling himself on his couch, and groan aloud.

Then he would beat the sofa on which he lay, face downward, with his clenched hand, and sigh and groan and weep hot tears in the bitterness of his soul. Then, worn, weary, spent, despairful—then what? A glass or two of spirits from the decanter, which was kept so handy, and he was able to "pull himself together" again, and attempt life's duties, duties which had been a sacred delight, but which were now—O, the slavery of it!—a heart-break to him; a doleful, mechanical grinding at the mill!

One Sunday night, Mr. Norwood Hayes came to fetch him to the house of God, for it was very late. He had to force the door of his study, and there, seated at his table, with his head lying on the table, was the pastor, helplessly asleep and drunk.

Mr. Hayes explained to the gathered congregation—it was significantly small—that the pastor was too ill to conduct the service, and, therefore, that none could be held. He could have conducted it himself; there were others present who could have done the same; but he knew, they knew, everybody knew, what the pastor's "illness" meant, and fitly enough, silence best befitted the place and time.

Poor Dunwell! From that sad day the course of this servant of God was one of swift decline. He speedily sank out of sight, and was at length whelmed in the surging deep. Some sorrowed over him, pitied him, loved him still; some sternly condemned him, and protested against the weakness

of will that slid him down to ruin ; and some, ay, many, made him the topic of pot-house conversation, made fun of the "drunken parson," and laughed at and cursed "religion" and "Christianity," and once more crucified the loving, the holy, and the beautiful Christ !

And this was the work of Strong Drink ! the work of the evil spirit which is favoured by the patronage of the Christian people, and which, then as now, is working in pulpit and in pew, as well as on the crowd without, desolation, damnation, and woe ! O, but it is awful ! When will the Christian churches arise in banded action and strong resolve, to expel from their sacred circles, utterly and for ever, this king of all the devils, Strong Drink ?

"Some stern'y condemned him." Yes, and among the rest, Mr. Norwood Hayes. In his heart he despised this *man*, made in the image of God, brought a little lower than the beasts. Yet it was at that good man's bounteous and hospitable table that he had been largely trained to travel to the land of darkness, and the moon of night. Did no thought of compunction enter his mind, I wonder ? Perhaps not yet. True, another victim has fallen on the road bestrewed with dead men's bones ; but that made his own steadfast standing all the more noteworthy, and likely enough raised him highly in his own esteem. But the awakening was coming

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

**A**S is, alas, too common with country congregationalism, the church once without a pastor must have remained without one indefinitely, and would have done so doubtless, had it not been for Aaron Brigham. As it was, they had supply after supply, and each preacher knew that he was practically preaching a trial sermon, and did his best, but the church, perhaps prostrated by the sad event that had led to the old pastor's retirement, more probably, judging from the general course of events in such cases, prostrate with apathy, could not make up its mind to invite any of them. The objections to many of them were weak, but as there was not much enthusiasm in favour of any given supply, they were strong enough to prevent a call.

Our old friend, Aaron Brigham, did not usually interfere much in matters of church government, but the sad mishaps I have chronicled had stirred the old man to the depths, and partly influenced by the shilly-shallying which seemed about to doom the church to go pastorless through time, partly in hopes of getting some earnest leader for the sadly-wrecked temperance work in place of Walter Bardsley, he made up his mind that some minister should be asked to preach who would speak to the people with no uncertain sound on the sin of intemperance, the perils of strong drink, and the duty of the church in the matter. It was at a church meeting that the good old man delivered his mind upon the subject.

"Why don't yo' ax somebody te cum an' preach that'll tell us all wer duty to wer neighbour. There isn't a week

i' t' year, nor a day i' t' week, that Netherborough isn't disgraced wi' what gans on i' the public-hooses, an' them ootside on 'em, let alooan t' mischief that's done i' fooak's houses. Ah tell yo' wer chotchyard is gettin' fair glutted wi' them 'at's fallen through strang drink, and there's nowt but weepin' an' sorrowin', an' rags an' misery, whereivver the ugly thing finds hoose-room. Ah sud think 'at this chotch, at any rate, hes cause te wakken up on this subject. We've lost yan o' the finest men that God ever called te preeach the Gospel o' love an' marcy, an' if we ho'd wer voice aboot it, the varry steeans 'll cry out ageean us. Ah's sorry te ha' te speak so warmly, but Ah can't an' Ah weean't be still. Iniquity and misery run down wer streets like watter, an' meeast on it comes oot o' t' bottle and barrel, an' if the Lord's chotch dizn't set aboot puttin' a stop te it, Ah tell yo' what, the Lord 'll seean put a stop te it. Ah propooase that we hev a temperance minister, an' let's ask him to tell us all that's in his heart aboot the evil sperrit that's robbin' the Lord of His own bairns, an' thrustin' 'em oot into darkness an' the grave, an' sendin' 'em te hell straight from the varry hoose o' God. Ma poor awd heead is bowed doon wi' sheeame, an' me heart's a'most brokken te see wer members racin' te ruin, an' helpin' other fooaks te ruin an' all."

The old man spoke with such fervour and feeling that the meeting was deeply impressed. Jeannie Bardsley rose up instantly to second the motion. Mr. Norwood Hayes made some slight attempt to throw cold water on the proposal, little thinking of the shock that was in store for him. This brought the kindly soul to her feet again. A rush of feeling came to her aid—

"To-day," said she, "I've been to the churchyard to weep, as I have wept before, by the grave of my buried love; and oh, how many graves there are all round him of those whom I know were slain by strong drink! I look on that

empty pulpit, and I can scarce speak for the choking in my throat. There's scarce a house in Netherborough that hasn't a dark shadow on the hearthstone made by drink. Oh, it does seem to me that the town is being filled with lamentation, mourning, and woe. Where are the young men gone who were with us in church communion? You'll find some of them at this moment at the bar of the 'Dragon,' or the taproom of the 'Netherborough Arms.' Something must be done, and that right quickly, or the judgment of God, which has smitten us so heavily, will smite us again. Let us stand up and entreat the Lord that this plague may be stayed."

The speaker sank exhausted with her impassioned appeal, hid her face in her hands, and wept.

Seated in a pew a little way behind his sister sat Walter Bardsley and his young wife. It is not very long since these two were married, but it has been long enough to take the roses out of the cheeks of one and transfer them in parody to those of the other, for Walter Bardsley was on a genuine down grade, and the young wife was reaping in fear and sorrow some earnest of the harvest she went a-sowing on her bridal morn.

As soon as his sister ceased speaking, Walter sprang to his feet, and said loudly and impulsively, as if he feared the impulse would pass off—

"I, too, desire to support the motion. There was a time, not so long back, when I could gladly have led such a movement myself, and found a righteous joy in pushing it to an issue. As it is,"—and the very spirit of despair seemed to inspire his words,—“I myself am being pushed to an issue by the devil, who has had home and shelter in our church long enough. What the climax will be I dare not think. Would to God I had never—”

He had spoken hotly and hastily—had spoken as though each word was a whip with which he was lashing himself.

Suddenly he remembered that at every word, with tenfold force, he was also lashing the trembling woman at his side. He loved her dearly ; so he said no more, but left his seat and silently retired. Poor Walter ! Heart and mind and conscience were all alive and quick within him—all the more forceful that he had knowingly silenced their voice with wine. Is he saved, or will the cunning devil silence the voice of warning, and once again lure him into the fatal track ? He is full of remorse and anguish ; but the alcoholic inheritance has its roots in his very vitals, and its hand upon his throat ; and, gentle though he seems, there is no more relentless, unrelaxing fiend in hell. It had slain half, or more than half, in the household in which he was born, and he felt it was slaying him.

There was a silence in the place—a silence that might be felt. The measure of the feeling that prevailed may be understood when I say that Norwood Hayes sat with a face pale and bloodless, stunned, as though an unseen hand had dealt him a giant blow. There was no further discussion—there hardly could be ; the motion was passed without a dissentient voice. It was finally arranged that a minister from Hull, a well-known but comparatively youthful temperance advocate, who had up to now not accepted any pastorate, but had confined himself to temperance work, should be invited to uplift the flag of total abstinence—unique event !—within the walls of the house of God.

A better man for the purpose they could not have happened on. The Rev. Edwin Hallows believed that Abstinence was a part and parcel of practical Christianity. He did not believe in it as a good thing that might with advantage be tacked on to Christianity, but to him it was a part, and an essential part. Indeed, according to his idea, and it is undoubtedly the right one, whatever thing is wholly good must from its very nature and the nature of Christ Himself, be of the essence of Christianity. Another



good point about the man was that he never descended to bandy words and arguments with those who by this means try to shield themselves from the accusations, not of the Temperance speaker, but their own conscience. The point does not arise whether Christ drank fermented wine two thousand years ago in Galilee. This is the question that Hallowes drove home. If Christ lived here and now, what would His course of action be? There is but one answer, and the young evangelist knew that that question fairly answered, decided the matter.

Not only on the Temperance question, but on every other question, this was a favourite formula of his, and though it has no direct bearing on my story, still so good a one is it, that I would fain impress it on my readers' minds as a guide at every meeting of the roads. Sometimes it really seems that either of the two ways is right. It never is so, but it seems to be. Then is the time to ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" and there is no longer any mistake as to which is right.

It happened that Mr. Hallowes was engaged two or three Sundays deep, and was, therefore, unable to occupy the Netherborough pulpit for that length of time. Nevertheless, arrangements were made that he should preach on the first vacant Sunday he had. Just two weeks before that date, Cuthbert Hayes, having "learnt business," returned to his father's house.

The morning sermon was a powerful discourse on the duty and the privilege of Christian self-sacrifice. It was one sustained home-thrust, and some who heard it visibly shrank through the acuteness of their mental pain. Speaking of the duty of every Christian to abstain from strong drink, he said, after he had painted in strong colours the evil doings of the liquor fiend:—

"Is this indictment true? Then what has a Christian, that is, a Christ's man, to do with this accursed thing?

Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled? Can the body of Christ receive into it and assimilate the perilous stuff from which the Head of the body would have turned His pure lips away? It is true that drink has poisoned the blood of the unborn babe, doomed from its first cry to be the bond-slave of alcohol—but it tastes good! It is true that noble youth, with the stamp of manhood on its brow, is wrecked and shattered and broken in the very morning of his days—but it is pleasant to the taste! It is true that it has prostituted fair maidenhood to a career of shame, and a grave before girlhood's years are past—but it is an enjoyable beverage! It is true that it has shattered manhood, killed character, quenched the fires of genius, hurled noble reputations into fathomless mire, covered grey hairs with grimmest shame, and broken hearts almost angelic in their power of faith and love. It has done all this, and dug hells of fire and agony, that may neither be bottomed nor gauged—but it is a refreshing thing to quaff, leaves quite a glow behind it, gives a filip to jaded nerves, and adds an impulse of cheer to the social board!

‘So fill up the glass, and let the wine pass,  
And joy in the juice of the vine;  
If others go wrong, as they stumble along,  
Why, that is no business of mine.’

“And this is the conventional Christ's man! This! This! This! This is he who hath heard the call of the Master! He of the thorn-crown! He of the wounded hands and side! And as the gentle Jesus moves on with bleeding feet, trampling over mountains, bleak and bare, to seek and save the lost, with an anxious love that surges to a heart-break, He says to the Christian, ‘Follow Me,’ and this is the way he does it!”

The influence of the sermon was immense. Not a soul present but what was stirred to its very depths, and doubtless had he so desired, Mr. Hallowes might then and

there have gained many of those present as soldiers in the Hoiy War. But he had another plan. He was not content with the possibility of gaining one or two where he might haply gain all, and powerful as his morning's discourse had been, he had reserved himself for a supreamer effort, and a more direct appeal, at night. Aaron Brigham was in ecstacies.

"Thet's preaching noo," said he, "naebody can slink away an' say 'at it was t' thing for 'is next deear naybour. There's nae misteeake aboot it, hit ivery yan o' us, and it's boond te deea good.

## CHAPTER XL.

**B**UT how shall I describe the evening sermon? It was a veritable masterpiece, and had a powerful influence for good, because the preacher put his soul into his words.

He took for his text the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of Mark nine, and graphically described the scene at the foot of Mount Hermon, the gathered crowd, the demon-tormented boy, the distracted father, and the baffled disciples. Up on the hill top the favoured three were witnessing the glory of the Master, and Peter, like many a Christian of to-day, felt that it was good to be there, though all the time in the vale below, devils were playing their lawless pranks without restraint. "Too many Christians," said the preacher, "are content to be on the mountain alone with God, while the world, of which they are the salt, goes on its unimpeded way to corruption.

"Down the mountain side comes the Saviour, but what a humiliating and heart-breaking picture it was that met His sight. A scene of triumphant infidelity and defeated truth; a picture, more shame to us who bear His name, painted in standing and staring colours all around us at this present day! British youth, writhing and pining under the spell of legions of destroying devils, a grief-stricken army of despairing fathers, heart-broken mothers, and shame-smitten friends appealing to the Christian forces of the church to 'Cast them out'—and we cannot! An atheistic unbelief laughs aloud, and the laughter is echoed from an exultant hell."

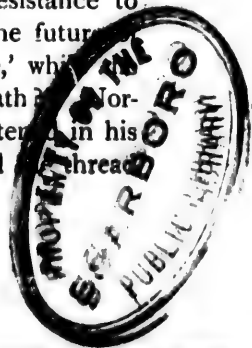
Then in loving, sympathetic words he described how the Man of Sorrow vanquished the devil in the boy, and presented him a living soul once again to his father.

"There may be many demons," continued the preacher, "but surely the chief of them all is the demon Drink, and truly the description here given applies to him in every way. He was a 'foul spirit.' That by common consent is a description of the drink fiend as it wrecks and ruins the lives of those of whom it has become possessed. How a 'foul spirit' in one case can be an angel of light in another is beyond my ken.

"It was a 'dumb' spirit; and is not this? It is secret, silent, insidious in its approach upon its victim, who hears no warning, detects no harm. The rattle-snake springs its rattle ere it curves to strike; but all unknown, unnoted, the dumb devil creeps amid family socialities, friendly gatherings, and public festivities—secret and silent as the grave it designs to fill. The victim becomes dumb too, and indulges his new-found craving in the silence of secrecy.

"Deaf it was; and is not this deaf? Never an ear has it for the cries and pleadings of the reluctant victim, or the tears of the wife, the mother, the child. The piteous cry, 'Come home!' only wakes the vacuous laughter of the bar-room; for all are deaf, stone deaf, and reason, friendship, pity, anger, law, and even love, shall speak in vain to the deaf, dumb devil of Strong Drink!

"'Wheresoever he taketh him.' The victim is at his power; every succeeding step is downward, and at every step the subtle coils are tightening round the victim of the demon Drink. There 'may be' sufficient resistance to snap the damning spell. But will you risk the future of your lad on that fine-spun thread of 'may be,' when an open gulf of a likelier 'shall be' lies underneath? For wood Hayes hung his head, and a tear-drop glistened in his eye. Just what had he done—he knew it,—and the thread



had broken. Enticement first, and then compulsion. The devil taketh him and hurries him down the fatal steeps, though the victim knows that the dead are there, and his feet take hold on hell.

"'Dasheth him down': the sight is too common; 'foameth, gnasheth, grindeth his teeth': not half strong enough, a picture of delirium; and then 'he pineth away'—for when the fierce, unholy stimulus is away, there is collapse, the nerveless, quaking limb, the devious step, the hesitating foot, the face all blotched or sallow.

"Again, 'How long ago is it since this came to him?' 'Of a child.' I have seen a mother give it to her babe, and the bright young folk around the dinner table have become acquainted with it there." And again Norwood Hayes groaned in spirit, for that was where Cuthbert had first learnt to drink—from his father's glass.

"It hath cast him into the fire or water. Is not that true to life? How many accidents have you had in Netherborough that you cannot trace to drink? Few, I am certain, though I do not know the town.

"Now, look for a moment at this haggard father, whose cheeks are blistered with a ceaseless rain of tears. The foul spirit did that, too, and if you and I could go to that home from whence the lad had come, we should see a home circle blasted by that one master sorrow. I'll match it and surpass it in a thousand English homes to-night; ay, and in not a few in Netherborough. 'Have compassion on us.' Us, do you hear. When the devil struck that lad, he struck the father a heavier blow! Said a mother to me when I asked to see her husband, all ignorant of what had fallen on them, 'He's ill in bed, and so is Hannah, and I'm as ill as they. O sir, our boy, our boy!' and she burst into a passion of tears. 'Our boy,' as she called him, was in gaol on a charge of manslaughter, committed in a

drunken brawl. True, 'he dasheth him down,' and dasheth down innocent others in agony and shame."

Norwood Hayes felt that he answered to all of Mr. Hallowes' description, save and except that he was himself not innocent. The preacher continued :

" 'Come out of him,' said Jesus, 'enter no more into him,' and out he came. There was no moderate treatment of the foul spirit here, though the command meant a mighty tussle for the boy. He did not say, 'Come partially out ; nor yet, 'Take up less room ;' nor yet 'Restrain yourself a little.' He said, 'Come out.' He didn't say, 'Come back occasionally,' 'Visit him on birthdays and social re-unions, and public festivals.' No, He said, 'Enter no more into him.' That was a teetotal deliverance, and when you have foul spirits to deal with, that is the only prescription that meets the case.

"I have spoken of the attitude of the Christian Church upon this subject. It will bear further study. Here in England the Church stands in the presence of this Demon Drink, and philanthropy, policy, patriotism, and humanity, ay, and the very victims themselves, cry aloud to Christianity to 'Cast him out.' We declare ourselves the representatives of Jesus. Indeed we are a good deal jealous of any rivals in the field, and yet the cry comes to us and we are forced to own our inability. We cannot cast him out. Why?

" 'This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.' Here is the reason. Our prayer is a myth. Forms of words are not prayer whether formal or extempore. Prayer is labour, and how many of us labour to cast him out? Fasting is denying, fasting is self-sacrifice, fasting means giving up for Christ and the giving up for others. Alcohol beats the churches, because the churches are in league with alcohol, and till we expel him from the land he curses and defiles, we cannot cast him out."

Then followed an impassioned personal appeal. To

those that were strong for the sake of others, to those that were weak for their own. "Some, I am sure, within these four walls *are* in danger, more firmly in the drink fiend's grasp than even you know. May not my voice to-night be as a message from Christ Himself to save you from a downfall such as appals the very thoughts?" He finished with an appeal to the young, and then stepping to the Communion-table, he laid his private pledge-book on it.

"Who is on the Lord's side?" said he. "Let him here and now enroll himself a soldier of the Christ—the enemy of the devil, and that grimmest of all devils, strong drink."

A moment's pause, and then Norwood Hayes stepped forward, signed his name with a strong, firm hand, and turning to the congregation, he said with broken voice and bowed head:

"I have been wrong. May God forgive me."

Dear old Aaron was bound to say, "Praise the Lord!" and even Netherborough nonconformity was, for that occasion only, too much wrought up to be shocked.

Norwood Hayes was instantly followed by his son-in-law, Walter Bardsley. Mr. Hayes had taken his seat again. He looked on for a moment in strong surprise, and then bowing his head in his hands, he prayed for the young man to whom he had given his well-loved daughter. Prayed that he might be saved from the fate that had overtaken Cuthbert, and through his doing.

"Father, help me," said Walter, as he touched him and passed on. And every word went like a dagger to his father's heart.

Full fifty pledges were taken at the table, and so ended the day in which fair temperance first found her place in that sanctuary of God.

As a natural result of this splendid Temperance revival, a unanimous call was given to Edwin Hallows to the pastorate of Netherborough Congregational Church. The



young Temperance evangelist had learnt something of the state of Netherborough, and felt that there was a big work to be done ; therefore, though he had not up to then taken the idea of a settled pastorate into consideration, he felt that the call was the ordering of God's providence, and under the circumstances he decided to accept it, much to the delight of Jennie Bardsley, old Aaron Brigham, and Walter. To the two first it was an evidence of increased spiritual vitality ; to the last it was as the olive branch of hope, for it is wonderful how our weak human nature, when worsted in a fight, looks for and gains help from the stalwart fibre of a manly mind.

## CHAPTER XLI.

EDWIN HALLOWES made it a *sine qua non* of his acceptance of the pastorate, however, that he should have an absolutely "free hand" in Temperance matters, and this, though it was objected to by one or two, on the grounds that his "rabid" Temperance opinions might offend some of the members, was eventually conceded. It is needless to say that those who objected, objected solely for the sake of others, at least they said so. Of course the matter, whichever way it was decided, would not affect them. This is the general plan of the carpers, and the moral drags on the advancing wheels of the Gospel, their objections are invariably made on behalf of some third persons, who rarely, if ever, put in their appearance.

The first use Edwin Hallows made of his powers was to abolish fermented wine, once and for ever, from the Lord's table, substituting in its place the pure, unfermented juice of the grape, which there is no question was the beverage in which the first communion was celebrated. Norwood Hayes made no objection whatever to the change. The soul-sickening object lesson which poor Tom Smart had given him, had altogether indisposed him for such a course of proceeding. But in spite of Tom Smart's sad fall, there were one or two who covertly resented the change. One in particular thought that the unfermented grape-juice was by no means so palatable as the wine. When the new pastor heard of this, he was, naturally, somewhat disgusted that any so-called Christian should balance a question of taste against the possible loss of a human soul. The next

time he met this member, he attacked him straightforwardly about the matter, and though not given to that keen-edged weapon, sarcasm, he felt that the occasion justified it.

"Sir," said he, "if the sacrament of dying love be to you but a question of palate, would it not be advisable to substitute cake for the piece of dry bread? It would doubtless be far pleasanter!" To which there was no answer.

Others, badly affected by the despondent earth-spirit, while they quite agreed that the step taken was right and good, could, nevertheless, not refrain from looking with misgiving upon what the financial result might be. This spirit, paltry as it may seem, is one of the most common with which a pastor has to contend, and one of the hardest to overcome. Faith to believe that God can do everything, is so strong, while faith to believe that He can, and will, do the very thing in question, is so lamentably weak.

Strong in the God-given sense of right, and strong in the large influx of spiritual power which had come to the Church with his advent, Edwin Hallowes went his onward way, turning for his purpose neither right nor left; for none of these things moved him, and while, on the one hand, the church increased in numbers and power, on the other, the only adverse result was an absolute blessing, this was the secession of a member of "the trade" to the Anglican fold, the gentleman, in fact, who had found the unfermented grape-juice unpalatable.

His next step was to re-organise the Band of Hope, for he well knew the immense power of habit, power for good if the habit be good, power for evil if it be evil. "As the twig is bent the tree is inclined," and when solid wood is formed no power in nature can bend it straight. So with man, no power in nature can straighten a twisted character, though, thank God, if we are but willing, Grace can and does work the moral miracle.

But, to my thinking, Edwin Hallowes set a fashion in

Bands of Hope which it would have been well had we followed it to this very day. He included all ages in it. By this means he bridged the gap between youth and manhood, that fatal gap, in which the churches of to-day lose so many of their best and brightest. In this he was greatly aided by the move old Aaron Brigham had already made in this direction, and his new converts were straightway marshalled into the fighting regiment. No difficulty was found in making these different sections coalesce, for the instruction given to the children was equally serviceable to the grown-up folks, and, indeed, was all the more appreciated in that the simple, straightforward language used made everything plain and easily understood. As for the entertainments, these were grand successes, for the youngsters enjoyed them much, all the more that they themselves took part in them, and the oldsters were delighted to see the young ones pleased.

Beside this the new pastor went in for aggressive temperance work, finances to the contrary notwithstanding, and with such good effect that within two years five of the public-houses in Netherborough were driven to close their doors. Unfortunately, though the devil was hard hit, there was still a heavy harvest for him to reap, the outcome of the long and busy sowing season previous.

It must not be thought, either, that this revolution took place unhindered. "The trade" and its supporters, beer-befuddled and otherwise, took good care of that. For a time it showed an immense amount of pluck and strength of character for any of the farm hands or small tradesmen to side boldly with the "cold water" men, and not moral pluck only, for some of the arguments used took the form of brick-bats and rotten eggs. One most convincing argument on the part of the rowdies was for a time to get "gloriously drunk," and then go and smash the chapel windows and the windows of such "cold water" men as were handy. This

plan, however, did not always work, for when men are "gloriously drunk" their power of discrimination is not generally to be relied on, and on more than one occasion the windows of some friends of "the trade" were smashed in mistake. The plan was finally put a stop to when one individual, in the excess of his beer-given ardour went and demolished the finest of the three stained glass windows in the church.

By no means the least in this anti-temperance movement were the Vicar and Dr. Medway. Thank God the drunken clergyman is now a thing of the past; would that I could say the same of the non-abstaining parson, and the drunken medico is a *rara avis*. Here let me dismiss these two. They are not important characters, and my story runs on without them.

Within the two years I have mentioned, Dr. Medway was one morning found dead in his bed. The usual inquest was held; the verdict on this occasion was "Death from apoplexy." The medical men know more on such subjects than I do, and it may have been strictly true, and yet for all that it was a lie. Any of those now living in his native town who knew him when they were youngsters will give you a truer verdict, "Drank himself to death." That is the unvarnished truth, medical testimony and the jury's verdict to the contrary notwithstanding. He was put to bed dead drunk. In the morning he was not drunk, but he was dead.

The vicar was killed in the hunting field through his horse falling on him. In this instance the catastrophe did not happen through the immediate agency of drink. Whether the accident would have occurred had his hand not been unsteadied by constant drinking I cannot say; he was, however, certainly not under the influence of liquor at the time.

Singular to relate, Edwin Hallowes' right hand man in all the work he undertook was a woman—Jennie Bardsley, of

course. Her heart and soul was in the fight against that arch-traitor that had already robbed her of her lover and her nearer relatives, and which was not yet satiated, but demanded another, though she knew it not.

Kitty Smart was now living with her. After her father's death, it had been arranged between her and Norwood Hayes that the little mother and "the chilther" should be saved from the unjust and unlawful ignominy of the work-house. It had seemed to both of them that they, as members of the Congregational Church, were, in great measure, responsible for the children's double orphanhood, and so it was decided, much to Kitty's delight, that she should take up her quarters with Miss Bardsley, in order that she might be thoroughly trained in the art and mystery of domestic affairs. Nor was much difficulty experienced in persuading kindly Mrs. Consett to undertake for the other children till such time as they could be launched on the world on their own account, their maintenance during that period being guaranteed by Norwood Hayes.

One would surely think that after all the varied experiences that Norwood Hayes had had of the power and curse of drink, it would not have been difficult for him to have kept the pledge he had taken under such strong emotion. Still another witness had been added to the testimony against the drink, for his wife, the mother of Cuthbert and Alice, had just died, a maudlin drink-made idiot. She, too, might have been saved had Norwood Hayes, from the outset of their married lives, despised the strength that was in him, and not the weakness that was in her.

The last years of her life were a misery to herself and everybody else who had aught to do with her, and there are hundreds of folk in like case to-day. Our asylums are largely filled with self-made cases of insanity, but there are

twice as many who, outside their friendly walls, only act the part of skeleton in some family or household.

Besides this, Cuthbert was under restraint. True, there was a hope that the drink habit might eventually be broken, and he be restored to sanity and his friends, but if so, surely this was all the more reason that Norwood Hayes should observe his vow with all the more rigid austerity. But ever since the days of Paul, ay, and before his time, it has been hard for us to kick against the pricks. Fortunate for Norwood Hayes was it that the goad was in the hands of God, but for that he must have fallen in spite of his better nature and determination.

## CHAPTER XLII.

THE culminating point in the history of Netherborough had arrived.

After much delay and no little anxiety on the part of the promoters, the new railway, which was confidently expected to work such wonders, was at last completed. York at length was in communication with Netherborough, and so its position as the leading town of the shire was secured to it for a further span, and the possibility of a career of unimagined splendour was thus opened up to ancient Eboracum.

Important as had been the inception of the design and the turning of the first sod, the actual completion of the undertaking was so much more important an event that the Netherburghers were at their wit's-end to devise a fitting commemoration that should proportionately outmatch the initial ceremony, and do full justice to this far more auspicious occasion. The pyrotechnic skill of Brook or Pain had not then been heard of, or doubtless something astounding in the way of novel fireworks would have been forthcoming. As it was, the Netherburghers had to be content with a tar-barrel.

In one especial point did this celebration differ from the previous one. On the urgent advice of Norwood Hayes, the free and festive beer-barrel was omitted from the programme; this, in the eyes of a few droughty souls, made the second ceremony far less imposing than the first, but it was certainly far better for everybody concerned. It was through Mr. Hayes, too, that the principal actors in the



scene partook of luncheon, instead of an evening banquet. Mr. Hayes hoped by this means to avoid a train of ghastly incidents similar to those that had occurred on the previous occasion.

Of course Huddlestone, the railway king, played the most prominent part in the proceedings, and as a set-off to the absence of free beer, as many of the inhabitants as cared to avail themselves of the privilege, were given a free ride to the neighbouring town of Brocklesbank and back. The more highly favoured travelling in the same train as the railway king.

Among the rest, old Aaron Brigham, in the character of the "oldest inhabitant," received special honours. He was introduced to Mr. Huddlestone himself, and after much persuasion he was induced to perform the initial journey in the great man's company.

Huddlestone was a genial, good-hearted fellow, and he was greatly interested in the winsome old man, whose quaint remarks, all the quainter perhaps in that he was by no means sure as to what the outcome of the—to him—dangerous experiment would be, created great amusement among the guests.

The rate at which the train moved, some twenty miles an hour at most, was to him something extraordinary, and when Mr. Huddlestone at length asked him, "Well, Mr. Brigham, and what do you think of railway travel?" he answered in his broad East Riding doric, "Weel, sir, it seeams te me thet it is a reear and grand reeate te gan te hivven at, bud it mun be a parlous bizness if t' rod lees t'other way;" and I doubt not that to Aaron the latter seemed the likelier similitude of the two.

It was quite hard work to find accommodation for the crowd that came, and the trains were kept a going merrily to the accompaniment of the engine whistles and the blowing-off of steam. This continued right from the time

of opening, up to and during the partaking of luncheon by the notables and chief inhabitants present.

Railway travel has a good deal altered since then, and though at the time it was a standing wonder to the Netherburghers, they would be very much disgusted at the present day if they had to make their journeys in third-class carriages, furnished only with benches round the sides, and open to the sky above. The first-class carriages, too, looked more like hybrid coaches, and differed almost as much from the luxurious carriages of to-day as the third did.

Luncheon was provided in a big marquee, specially provided for the occasion, and erected in the station-yard. The chair was occupied by Mr. Huddleston, who was supported by the Mayor of York, several directors of the railway company, the chief of the landed proprietary, Mr. Norwood Hayes, and many more of the prominent inhabitants of Netherborough and Brocklesbank. Grace was duly said, and the luncheon commenced.

Norwood Hayes, true to the pledge he had so solemnly taken, abstained from partaking of any alcoholic liquors, of which there was a plentiful supply, during the course of the luncheon. He was, however, greatly perturbed in mind as to what he should do when the toast list was reached. There was no doubt in his inmost soul as to what was the best and most manly thing for him to do, and perhaps the question would not have arisen had it not been for the fact that he had been chosen to propose "Success to the new railway." He heartily wished now that the honour had fallen upon somebody else, for the great majority of those at the head table knew nothing of his change of views nor the course of events that had led to that change, but at the same time they knew him well, and knew above all else the uncompromising position he adopted on the superiority of self-restraint; under the circumstances it would surely look very paltry, he thought, to introduce the vexed question of

teetotalism on so happy an occasion as the present, for his refusal to drink his own especial toast in wine must inevitably do that, and he was sure nothing would be gained by it, and he would only make himself look ridiculous, as Walter had done before. And yet; he had taken the pledge, and he was conscious that throughout the luncheon he had been, and was, the object of the closest scrutiny on the part of his son-in-law, Walter Bardsley. He felt that Walter had followed his example in scrupulously abstaining from intoxicants, and more, he felt on his present course of action might, in all probability, rest the future of his son-in-law, and the happiness of his girl. Nevertheless, under these very circumstances, struggle as he might, he was certain that he should be worsted in the fight. The course of his former life, the character he had sought to establish and maintain, the good opinion of his fellow men, that more than almost any other thing he craved, all were driving him irresistibly to commit a wrong, whose consequences might reach out far away beyond the grave.

But how could he help himself, he asked. That was where he made the mistake. He could not help himself. His only help must come from above.

The Chairman had already proposed the usual patriotic and loyal toast, in as neat and well-chosen terms as it was possible to use, in dealing with that hackneyed and wayworn subject, and the eyes of the guests, after consulting the toast list, were already beginning to fix themselves on Norwood Hayes, and still the struggle went on within him.

Before him stood the wine-glass—empty.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, it is my very pleasant duty," said the Chairman, "to call on Norwood Hayes, Esq., to propose the toast of the occasion, 'Success to the new railway.' I am quite sure, ladies and gentlemen, you will receive Mr. Norwood Hayes with acclamation, both on account of his own personal merits, and on account of the

importance of the toast which he has to submit." And he looked, as Norwood Hayes thought, significantly at the empty wine-glass, as turning towards him, he called on "Mr. Norwood Hayes."

The victory was lost and won. The very devils laughed in anticipation of their triumph, and a quiver passed over Walter Bardsley's face as he saw Norwood Hayes rise, reach for a bottle of wine that stood handy—it was *only* claret, and prepare to fill the glass that stood before him.

"Surely not in claret, Mr. Hayes," said the chairman. "Some more generous wine than that is befitting the occasion."

But neither in claret nor in any other wine was that toast destined to be drunk that day.

Just at the moment when Norwood Hayes stood with the claret bottle poised in his hand, half undecided as to whether he might not just as well be "hung for a sheep as a lamb;" just as Walter Bardsley had realised that one of his most needed props, a man of self-control, was giving way before his very eyes; just as the assembled company were preparing to do full justice to the noteworthy toast that was about to be proposed; just then the proceedings were brought to an abrupt and unlooked-for termination. Norwood Hayes was saved from breaking his vow, saved from yielding, in actual demonstration, to the devil, not by his vaunted self-control, that was conspicuous, if ever anything was, by its absence, but by a chance! a hap! a circumstance! In spite of the bitter teaching he had already received, the lesson was not yet thoroughly learnt. Another awful manifestation of the drink-fiend's power was needed to drive it home.

As he stood, a picture of weak-kneed vacillation, a cry of such awe-inspiring horror rose from the crowd assembled in the station-yard outside, as blanched the faces of most of those present, some of which were already deeply flushed

with the volatile fumes of wine, and sent that unspeakable, undefinable thrill of fear through the hearts of all. Something had happened.

What was it? No one thought now of the all-important toast that was about to be drunk. For a moment or two, that seemed an hour long, men looked at one another as if they would read the dreaded message in their companions' fear-marked faces. For that length of time the decorum of conventionality kept them in their places, and then, as no one came to bring the desired news, they all, with one accord, rose, deserted the festive scene, and made their way into the open, not knowing, hardly daring to think, what awaited them.

The first thing that met their gaze was a crowd gathered round and about the gates at the level-crossing, just beyond the station. On the outskirts were women weeping hysterically, and children, hardly knowing what had happened, stunned with the general sense of horror.

A way was at once made for Mr. Huddleston and those with him, amongst whom were Norwood Hayes and Walter Bardsley. Some of the onlookers looked half reproachfully at the railway king, as if they would have said, "See what your new railway has brought us!" but surely Mr. Huddleston was not to blame, though I think he felt the misfortune as much as any present.

Passing rapidly on to the lines, they were confronted with a ghastly sight. On the down rails lay the body of a horse, crushed and mangled into a shapeless mass, almost beyond recognition. It lay in a pool of blood, and rails and gates and everything around were marked and sprinkled with its life-blood. Just beyond, a little crowd stood round a dying or dead man, over whom a graceful girl was stooping, doing her best to support him, but it was of no avail. At a glance Walter Bardsley recognised his sister, Jennie; another

glance revealed the fact that the dying man was his erring brother, Dick.

"There's been an accident," said Mr. Huddlestone in an undertone, as they made their way to the side of the dying man.

"I thought as much, but how it has come about is more than I can conceive. The gates are shut, and I gave most stringent orders that every care should be exercised. Still it's no time to find out how it's happened. It *has* happened. Do you know who the man is?" he added, turning to Walter.

"Yes. He's my brother."

"Your brother! And who is that with him?"

"She is my sister."

The tone was matter of fact, but Mr. Huddlestone knew enough of human nature to know that his young companion's heart was breaking. *He* knew how the accident had happened, though no one had told him. Drink, and drink only, could have done it. How narrow the bounds that kept him from such a state he alone knew, but his thoughts were not for himself only nor chiefly. Alas, poor Dick, and sadder still, alas, poor Jennie.

Mr. Huddlestone said nothing in reply, but Dick felt his sympathy, perhaps all the more that he made no formal, feelingless parade of it. Instead, he showed it. He took charge of affairs. Sent for the doctor. Not daring to move the injured man till he arrived. Saw that the half-dazed station men kept back the crowd. Sent one for brandy and water. It was about the worst thing he could have done, but nobody knew or cared to know better then, and in any case it did no harm this time, for Dick would never touch it again. The doctor happened to be sober, but all that he could do was to tell them the sufferer was dead.

Tenderly and reverently they bore the crushed body to

the house of Mr. Norwood Hayes. Death, even when his victim is "but a drunkard," has a majesty all his own, besides, the hearts of all the rugged townfolk went out in wondrous sympathy to the sorrowing, suffering girl that followed on.

They did not finish the toast list that day ; did not even re-enter the marquee, and the free trains ceased running—there would have been no one to ride had they continued—and so the day that was to have been the most brilliant in the history of Netherborough, finished under the sobering influence of the shadow of death.

In the house of Mr. Norwood Hayes the shadow settled ; and how could it be lifted ? How could the Christian hope find an abiding place there ? What think ye, ye brothers and sisters and husbands and wives and parents, on whose example the welfare of an immortal soul may rest ? As surely as the blood of Abel cried to an upright God against the manslayer Cain, so surely shall the blood of drink's myriad victims cry out against those that have led them to the grave, and think you that God will hold you guiltless, you who have implanted the drink habit in your unborn babes, or you who, standing firm yourselves on treacherous grounds, have lured your brethren to their deaths ? Be not deceived. God is not mocked, and where the sin is, there will the suffering be. "Whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap."

## CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW did it all happen? Walter Bardsley was right enough. Drink, and drink only, was to blame. Dick Bardsley had been spending the morning at a neighbouring village. He was always a welcome guest at the wayside inn, for he could pay his way like a man, and was good for drinks round should occasion require it. What it was that had called him there I do not quite know, but he had expressed his determination not to be present at the luncheon to see his brother and his father-in-law make fools of themselves. This was his way of describing their refraining from alcoholic beverages, and of course he was unaware of the noble way in which Norwood Hayes nearly, very nearly, succeeded in making a fool of himself in good earnest, but in a way that would have delighted Dick.

He did not miss the luncheon much, however, for there was plenty of similar stuff to that which was provided in the marquee to be obtained where he was, and he did obtain it to some purpose. First with one comer and then with another he occupied the public bar all the morning drinking "success to the new railway," in a far more "generous" liquor than claret.

Most of his companions stated it to be their intention to walk into Netherborough to have a look at the trains, and haply to dare the dangers of a ride to Brocklesbank. Most suggested to him that he should go too, and so, when after a bit he found himself deserted, and could get no other folk to come and drink with him, he decided he would go and have a ride.

Unfortunately, his horse had been standing saddled and



bridled, or otherwise he would have had to have stayed where he was, for he was in such a state that he could certainly neither have saddled the horse himself, or have walked in, and there was nobody else left in the village to do it for him. As it was, when he had once got into the saddle he was fairly safe, and perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, might have landed home all right. As it was, he managed well enough till he got within sight of the station at Netherborough, and then he was disgusted and annoyed to find that those miserable, new-fangled gates were shut against him. He worked himself up into a drunken rage at what he evidently regarded as a personal insult to himself, vented his spleen on his horse, put him at the gate, and leapt it just as a train from Brocklesbank was coming into the station. The horse stumbled on the iron rails, just recovered himself, was struck by the incoming train, and was killed on the spot, while Dick was hurled violently back against the gate he had just leapt, and fell, a crushed and dying mass.

Jennie Bardsley, who was among the interested spectators at the opening ceremony, and who had since been watching the trains and their loads of laughing lads and lasses (for the youngsters took most advantage of the free rides), witnessed the whole accident; and she who had lost her lover at the turning of the first sod, had now lost her brother at the completion of the line, and through the self-same instrumentality.

Pain can be so great that it cannot be felt. So with Jennie Bardsley—the mental anguish and horror was too great to affect her then. Instantly she made her way to her brother, and the crowd that had at once gathered round, immediately gave way to her in pitying silence. Gently she raised her brother's head and wiped his forehead with her handkerchief. But Dick did not recognise her: he died without a sigh.

At last Norwood Hayes had found out that after all his boasted strength was the most utter and absolute weakness. At last the lesson had been learnt ; the lesson that takes such a lot of learning by every one of us—"When I am weak, then am I strong." His own vacillation at the luncheon table was a revelation to him of himself. All these years he had thought, genuinely enough too, that he knew somewhat of the love of God. And yet his knowledge of the Father was but ignorance, deacon though he was, for he had not till then got the very initial step towards a knowledge of God, for he did not even know himself. He had thought himself complete master of himself. He had thought his word as good as his bond. If there was one thing he prided himself on it was his upright, manly, consistent character. To him the plan of salvation was an altogether excellent thing—for other people, those who needed it. He had never entertained the thought that he could possibly be anything but a good husband and father, and, if the truth must be told, had looked on his wife's affliction and his son's fall as trials altogether unmerited, but something on a par to the trials of Job.

No man properly appreciates the life-boat till he's drowning. No man thoroughly comprehends the value of the physician till he is deadly sick, and knows it : and so no one can realise the greatness of God till he understands his own littleness. No one can realise the love and tender compassion of the Christ, the Sin-bearer, till he understands himself to be a sinner, and in peril of his life. Then, when he sees himself unclean, and then only does he rightly value the services of the Great Physician, and plunging unquestioning into the fountain opened for all uncleanness become once again as a little child. True is it, the first step towards knowing God is to know ourselves.

Norwood Hayes, through the mercy of his God, had at last attained to that knowledge. In humbleness of heart he

confessed his sin to his Father, in and Christ, his Saviour, found all he needed both for time and for eternity. In his new-found strength in weakness, he unbosomed himself first to Jennie Bardsley, and then to Walter and his daughter Alice, and not content with that, he also unburdened his mind to Edwin Hallows, the young soldier of Christ. A change had indeed come over Norwood Hayes, the righteous, once in his own esteem, righteous now in the righteousness of Christ. To his pastor he expressed a desire to confess what but for the sad death of Dick Bardsley would have been his fall, what he himself would have had was a fall as real as if the deed had actually been consummated. But before Edwin Hallows would acquiesce in this design, he bade his deacon examine himself in the presence of his God to see that no unworthy remnants of false pride were urging him to the deed, no earth-born desire to reinstate himself in his own good graces. And Norwood Hayes accepted the admonition in the brotherly spirit it was given, and having communed with his own soul, still persisted in his design.

Accordingly, at the close of the next Sunday evening service, the pastor told the congregation that their deacon, Mr. Norwood Hayes, had something he desired to say to them, and Norwood Hayes rose, and in humble and yet manly fashion told the whole truth, and neither hid nor coloured anything. Told how, in his own strength, he had fought the battle and been routed, horse and foot, before the legions of the devil, and, better still, told how that he at last had truly found his Saviour, and how, in His strength, he intended thenceforth, until his dying hour, to fight the battle for his God.

The pastor, quick to seize an opportunity for the service of his Master, proclaimed a prayer-meeting. Everybody stayed. The pleasures of God's house for that night, at any rate, eclipsed the calls of supper, and such a season of

refreshing followed as surpassed any in the memory of them all.

Of course, old Aaron Brigham prayed, or rather, he praised, and Jennie, amid sobs of mingled joy and sorrow, and Walter Bardsley, the true Walter as we knew him before the fatal step was taken. Even George Caffer and Phil Lambert found it in their hearts to speak with God before His people and many more, and as the congregation went home that night, there was not one of them all but felt that it had been good for them to have been there, for they had met God face to face.

This, surely, must better be described as the culminating point in the history of Netherborough rather than the sad, sad opening of the new railway, for the influence of this day's work was felt for long in the little town. Norwood Hayes, in alliance with his God, became, indeed, a power for good, and for a time, at any rate, the temperance movement grew and prospered at an unprecedented rate.

## CHAPTER XI.IV.

**I**T only remains for me to gather together the loose threads and leave them ship-shape in case I should ever be tempted to take them up again.

With the advent of the Rev. Edwin Hallows and the firm stand taken by Norwood Hayes, a new era came to Netherborough. For a few years old Aaron Brigham participated in the grand work done, and then quietly, like a warrior taking his rest, he lay him down and fell on sleep. Like Simeon, having seen the salvation of the Lord, he was able with him to say with thankful mind, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." And peaceful, indeed, was the passing away of the dear old patriarch's soul.

Kitty, dear little Kitty, was happy as the day was long with Jennie Bardsley, and continued so some while after this story concludes. But seeing, as I hinted before, that I may possibly resume my pen, and seeing that if I do, Kitty will be one of my chief characters, I shall refrain from spoiling the flavour of the new story by anticipating, and so my readers must for the present rest content with what they know of Kitty and the "chilther."

And so the days and weeks and months passed on, and the tide of events flowed more evenly in their accustomed channels, as is their wont in our villages and towns when the current is undisturbed by the adverse influence of the drink-spirit. As long as Edwin Hallows remained in Netherborough, his power was held in check by the watchful care of the young pastor, though it was more even than he could do to altogether overcome his strong antagonist. Neverthe-

less by constantly, but not unduly, hammering away, and more especially by reason of the care he took in training and educating the young, a solid Temperance foundation was laid, the results of which, unknown maybe to man, have, I doubt not, reached down to this very day.

Norwood Hayes, strong in his new-found strength, held loyally to his pledge, and by his earnest support of Mr. Hallowes, did his best to retrieve the harm he had done in the past. Indeed, had it not been for him I think that Walter Bardsley would have fallen under the family curse.

As it was, he had one or two very narrow escapes, which he felt incapacitated him from taking up the prominent position on the public platform that he had done before the fall, but he made up for this by the manner in which he aided his pastor in training the young. He had always had a great influence with boys, and this he used to the utmost in persuading them to join the Temperance ranks. Not only did he find assistance in his father-in-law, but his sister and his wife—for Alice Bardsley became as strict a teetotaler as Jennie herself—stood by him and helped him to maintain the tremendous fight. Nevertheless, on his death-bed he thanked God that he had had no children to whom he might have bequeathed the awful love of drink.

Some two years after Cuthbert's enforced retirement, he was discharged from the asylum cured, but Norwood Hayes knew full well that only by the greatest care could he hope to save his son from the influence of the drink that had so nearly been his ruin. You may be sure that that care was exercised. His father kept him by him and so watched over him while he lived, that Cuthbert was thereafter able to stand by himself, though a temptation to which his son almost yielded came from a most unexpected quarter.

It happened that a special effort was being made to awaken interest in foreign missions, and to this end the Congregational Union was willing to send deputations to

any churches that were willing to receive them. Application was made by the church at Netherborough, and one of the missionaries home on furlough was sent to uphold the mission cause in accordance with the church's wishes. As was customary, Norwood Hayes provided a home for the visitor, who, I am sorry to say, was one of those gentlemen who, sincerely enough, I make no question, considered it unsafe to travel without a flask of brandy. He also believed that a little stimulant was a decided aid to digestion.

After dinner, when he went to get ready for the evening meeting, he took the opportunity of taking a mouthful of brandy and water. The spare bedroom was next to Cuthbert's and it happened that the missionary had left his room before Cuthbert was ready. When the young fellow came to leave his room and pass the partly open door of the visitor's bed-chamber, his attention was arrested by a slight but characteristic odour of brandy that proceeded from it. Turning, he caught sight of the flask which had unfortunately been left standing on the dressing table, and the next minute, against his very will, he had entered the room. He knew he had no right there, he knew he was most likely going straight to his doom, and yet the smell of the vile stuff had so aroused the latent devil in him, that he could not help himself.

With the cunning that seems inseparable from the drink-craving, he gently put the door to behind him, and the next minute had the fatal brandy-flask in his possession. Fortunately Norwood Hayes had seen him enter the room, thinking first that he was but speaking to their visitor, but when he heard no voices and saw his son closing the door behind him, he immediately suspected something was wrong, and rapidly crossing the landing he opened the bedroom door to see Cuthbert with the brandy flask in his hand.

The young fellow started guiltily, and dropped the flask back on the dressing table. His father affected not to see it.

"Mr. Henson has gone downstairs. You had better go and help him on with his coat."

Cuthbert made no remonstrance nor attempt to explain matters. He was perfectly aware that his father understood the situation. When he had gone downstairs, Norwood Hayes took possession of the flask, shuddering to think of his lad's narrow escape. Later, he found an opportunity of returning it to its owner with apologies, and an earnest request that he would see that it did not again get out of his possession.

"I have good reasons for my apparently unjustifiable conduct," he added, "which I hope you will not ask me to give."

Mr. Henson felt half inclined to be indignant, but somehow or other he concluded not to be. Nevertheless, it was a great relief all round when, on the next day, he took his departure in company with his travelling companion.

Edwin Hallowes was not long in discovering the true worth of his efficient co-worker, Jennie Bardsley. He was not long, either, in deciding that Jennie was in every way fitted to be a minister's wife. Intimately associated with her in all manner of good work, this is not to be wondered at. But for some time he made no open avowal of his admiration. This was partly due to the fact that he was fully aware of her sad history, and did not feel justified in forcing what might prove to be unwelcome advances, and partly because Jennie never gave him any encouragement. After some time had elapsed, however, Edwin Hallowes decided not to lose a prize for lack of asking, and accordingly he put the matter straight before her from his point of view, and offered her marriage.



The young pastor was loved by all who knew him, and Jennie felt honoured by his choice, and while she thought that she could make him a good wife, she would not accept him under any misapprehension. Accordingly, she insisted on giving him a full account of her life history, and then, after stating that though she respected him highly, and liked him more than any other, yet she could not pretend to the passion of love; she left the answer to him.

Edwin Hallows' answer was "Yes."

So they were quietly married; and here let me say in passing, that though they have been blessed with many children, yet from that day to this not one drop of alcohol has entered their house, nor have any of their children tasted it in their lives. In this instance, therefore, was the curse of the Bardsleys broken.

As might well have been expected, Edwin Hallows did not long remain pastor of Netherborough. Our country churches suffer from the way in which the bigger towns rapidly absorb the men of more than average power, not always, indeed not often, to their advantage, and frequently to the great injury of the churches left, for the time being, pastorless. But though Edwin Hallows received more than one call, he would accept none until he could conscientiously feel that the work he could do for Netherborough was done. Then he felt, and felt rightly, that a new man might be able to improve on his work, and he was free to seek a fresh field of labour.

It was a fixed thing, however, that once a year he should re-visit his old flock, and as he never failed to preach at least one temperance sermon, it came to be regarded as an annual temperance festival.

## CHAPTER XLV.

**M**Y story is for the present ended ; a story the chief characters of which, and the main incidents, are drawn from my own personal experience. Some of the pictures are drawn in as strong colours as I can command, and yet they are not half powerful enough. No tongue or pen can depict forcibly enough the horrors of this world-curse, and yet Christian men and women, ay, indeed, the Christian Church as a whole, is content to "let the sleeping dog lie." Most noble policy ! Could I but hope that I had roused some slight interest in this question among the churches, I should indeed be thankful. Was not Solomon the wise right when he said, "Wine is a mocker ?" Yes, indeed, but wine is a mocker in many more senses than one.

Not only does it mock its victims by promising pleasure and substituting pain, by promising strength and giving weakness, by promising satisfaction and giving in its place an insatiable craving, but it mocks the parents' hopes, the children's cry for bread, the wife's sad yearning for fellowship and love.

A mocker ? Yes ; it mocks our country till the beer-guzzling, spirit-swilling Englishman becomes a byword among the nations, a reproach to our subject tribes, whom we regard as uncivilised and barbarian. It promises a tremendous revenue, and our political wise-acres and budget-jugglers believe it, or pretend they do. If our liquor-licenses are withdrawn, where will our national income and our defences be ? And all the while the

"mockers" is draining our national resources by our work-houses, our lunatic asylums, and our gaols, to say nothing of the idle hands, hands worse than idle, the damaged credit, and the unproductive manufactories that strong drink provides—galore. And even if it were not so, better far for us to be defenceless than to be defended by the devil; better be without an income than derive it from a traffic in the souls and bodies of our fellow-men. Think you God compounds with sin for a percentage of the profits? How then can those who call Him Father?

Wine is a mocker! Ay, and it mocks the churches. It discredits our professions of purity and unselfishness, paralyses our efforts to promote sobriety and the religion of Christ, steals our youth, decimates our membership, and, like the waters of Lethe, it dulls the moral senses of those who, if wide awake, would proclaim war to the knife against this rampant foe of God-man, whose Canaanitish foot befouls and desecrates the very soil of Zion, the so-called holy city of our God. Will the churches ever rise to their high calling in Christ Jesus? Will they ever break away from the trammels that at present bind them hand and foot?

It mocks the earnest worker who, like his Lord and Master, would seek and save the lost. His prayers and pains, his toil and sacrifice, are worse than useless. Impressions are made for good; repentance is evident; reform begins; and on his knees the toiler of mercy thanks God, and takes courage. Then comes the "mockers"—"moving himself aright," and swift as thought draws the half-rescued slave away, to sell body and soul and birth-right for a mess of liquor.

O, alcohol, child of the devil, when will the churches, whose very first and foremost business it ought to be, arise in the strength of the holy Nazarene, and drive thee from the land?

"Oh, you who can speak, is a subject your guest?  
Here's one rings its pathos from orphans distressed,  
From hearts that are breaking while beer-glasses clink.  
With eloquence plead then—'Down, down with the drink!'

"Oh, you who can write, for a theme do you seek?  
Here's one upon which tongue and pen may both speak,  
With hundreds of thousands on jeopardy's brink,  
Write, in letters of fire—'Down, down with the drink!'

"Down with the shame of it!  
All bear the blame of it.  
Who's not the worse of it?  
Knows not the curse of it?  
Your hearts all on fire  
With holiest ire,  
Cry louder and higher,  
'Down, down with the drink!'"



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